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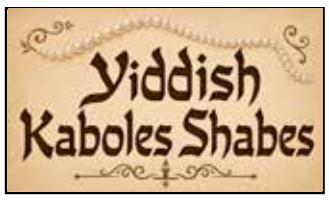

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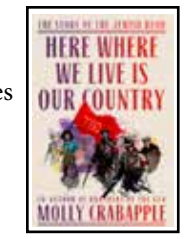

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WASHTENAW JEWISH NEWS

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Abby Lorkis and Joan Cohen Jones at the Amster Gallery

By Drew Coel, Marketing and Program Associate, Ann Arbor JCC

The Amster Gallery at the Ann Arbor JCC welcomes another spring season with two special exhibits, the reception taking place on Thursday, May 14, from 6 to 7:30 p.m. Enjoy light refreshments while exploring the work of two talented artists.

Abby Lorkis

Abby Lorkis is the Campus Director of the Orthodox Union's Jewish Learning Initiative on Campus (OU-JLIC) at the University of Michigan. Abby, her husband Uri, and her two kids, Naama and Lavi, welcome students into their home to cultivate connection and create meaningful Jewish experiences. Alongside her community work, Abby has always been drawn to art. She developed a love for Hebrew calligraphy and Jewish blessings, later combining this with her passion for painting florals. Her work — often created on olive wood — brings together sacred Hebrew words and natural beauty.

What began as a personal passion project, creating heartfelt gifts for loved ones, has grown into something that Abby is grateful to share: art that invites holiness, intention, and beauty into homes. Each piece gently reminds us to become the blessing we wish to see in the world, starting in our own homes.

Joan Cohen Jones returns to the Amster Gallery with a new collection of watercolor paintings. While working on this collection of pieces, Joan has continued to immerse herself into the art scene in Washtenaw County. Since her last exhibit at the JCC, Joan has participated in the Westside Art Hop as well as the very first Ann Arbor Studio art tour in November 2025. This new event allows participants to take a driving tour of the Ann Arbor area artists' studios and explore creative spaces, engage with artists, and gain insight into their creative processes. In its first year, the art tour included the work of 23 different artists at 15 studios across the Ann Arbor area, and those numbers are expected to grow at this year's event.

In addition to her participation in art events, Joan has also continued to teach art. In September 2025, Joan taught the second Sketch 'n' Sip at the JCC during the annual Apples & Honey fall festival, showing attendees how to paint fall-themed objects utilizing watercolor pencils. She also regularly teaches watercolor painting at the Dexter Senior Center and works with private pupils.

Both Abby and Joan's art pieces are available for viewing and for sale, now until mid-June. ■

Joan Cohen Jones

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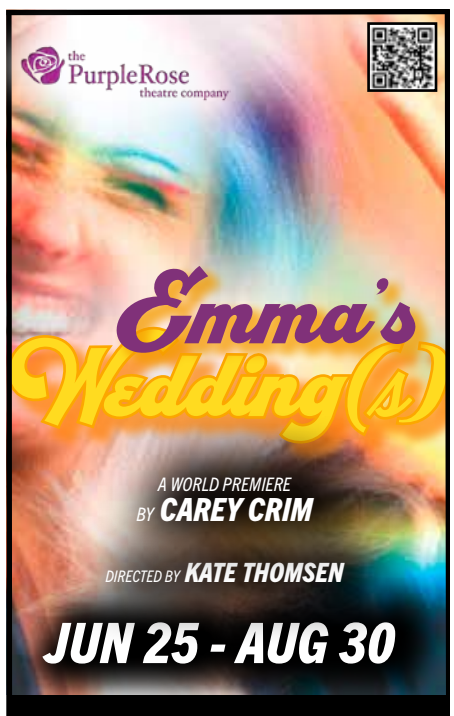

Emma is getting married. Again. For the fourth time, actually. But she's determined that this one will be the one. Gathering her less-than-enthusiastic best friends, they revisit each of Emma's previous weddings, leading to a hilarious romp through the decades, complete with '80s hair, dial-up internet, Boone's Farm wine and the enduring power of friendship.

*Contains adult language and subject matter.

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From the editor

May means Shavuot

In times of crisis, we summon up our strength.
Then, if we are lucky, we are able to call every resource, every forgotten image that can leap to our quickening, every memory that can make us know our power.

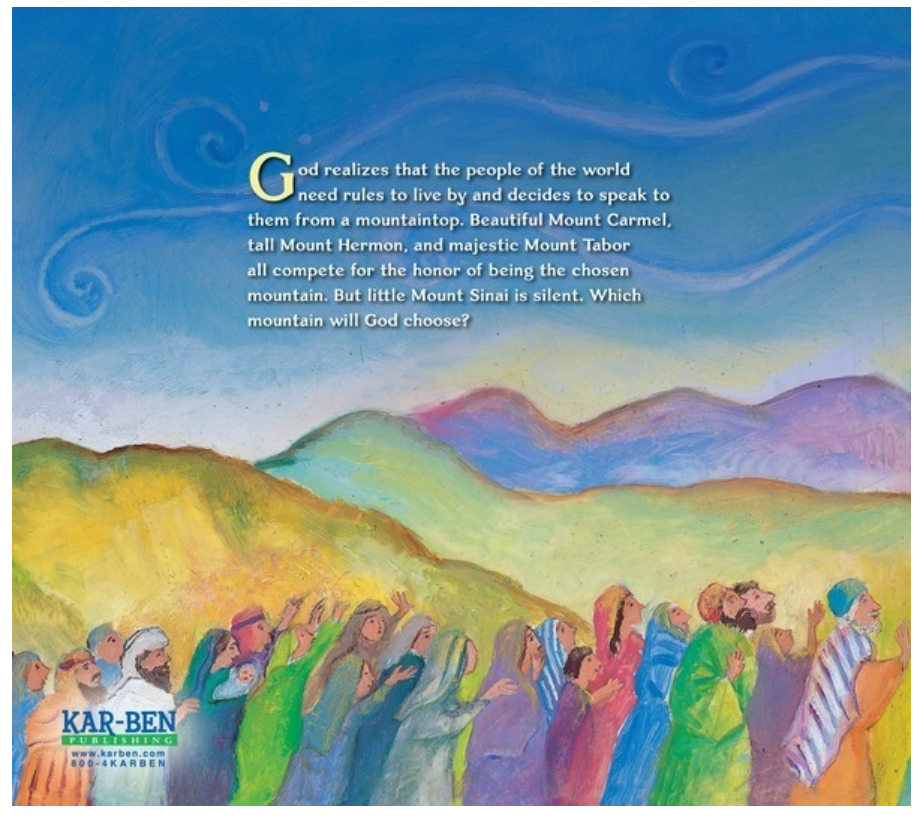
From Muriel Rukeyser's Introduction to The Life of Poetry (1949)

Twenty-five years ago, I used these words of Rukeyser as an epigraph to a volume of poetry I titled "The Resource of Our Imagination." That volume, including work by over 50 poets, was put together in 2002, during the direct aftermath of 9/11, when, then as now, terrible violence answered terrible violence. Those in power answer a massacre with a thousand bombs. The loss of life is irretrievable.

But those of us who are lucky, that is, still alive, can remember the terror and imagine something arises from despair, connection, or love. We can feed creativity, in ourselves and in others.

May is the month for Shavuot, which calls to mind, The Littlest Mountain, a story I love to read to the littles by Barb Rosenstock (illustrated by Melanie Hall).

Best wishes for a Shavuot of learning.


God realizes that the people of the world need rules to live by and decides to speak to them from a mountaintop. Beautiful Mount Carmel, tall Mount Hermon, and majestic Mount Tabor all compete for the honor of being the chosen mountain. But little Mount Sinai is silent. Which mountain will God choose?
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Signed letters to the editor are welcome; they should not exceed 400 words. Letters can be emailed to the editor. Name will be withheld at the discretion of the editor.

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Free inside Washtenaw County
$18 first-class subscription

Phone numbers, websites, and addresses of organizations frequently listed in the calendar:

Ann Arbor Orthodox Minyan (AAOM): 1429 Hill Street, 248-408-3269, annarborminyan.org
Ann Arbor Reconstructionist Congregation (AARC): 2935 Birch Hollow Drive, 734-445-1910, aarecon.org
Beth Israel Congregation (BIC): 2000 Washtenaw Ave, 734-665-9897, bethisrael-aa.org
Chabad House: 715 Hill Street, 734-995-3276, jewmich.com
Eastern Michigan University Center for Jewish Studies (EMU): www.emich.edu/jewish-studies/
Frankel Center: 202 S. Thayer St., lsa.umich.edu/judaic/
Jewish Community Center (JCC): 2935 Birch Hollow Drive, 745-971-0990, jccannarbor.org
Jewish Cultural Society (JCS): 2935 Birch Hollow Drive, 734-975-9872, jewishculturalsociety.org
Jewish Family Services (JFS): 2245 South State Street, 734-769-0209, jfsannarbor.org
Jewish Federation: 2939 Birch Hollow Drive, 734-677-0100, jewishannarbor.org
Pardes Hannah: 2010 Washtenaw Ave, 734-761-5324, pardeshannah.org
Temple Beth Emeth (TBE): 2309 Packard Road, 734-665-4744, templebethemeth.org
UM Hillel: 1429 Hill Street 734-769-0500, michiganhillel.org

World ORT leader will speak in Ann Arbor

By Babette Levy Daskin

Students at a STEM class in an ORT school in Kyiv in 2024

The Ann Arbor Chapter of World ORT will host its Annual Spring dinner on Tuesday, May 12, at 6 p.m. at Temple Beth Emeth. This will be an exciting opportunity to meet Allison Baumwald, a member of the Senior Leadership Team at World ORT. Rob Platt, Director of Midwest ORT, will conduct a fireside chat with Ms. Baumwald delving into how ORT makes a worldwide impact through its unique schools and educational programs.

ORT's mission is to transform lives through education driven by Jewish values and innovation that empowers people and strengthens communities. In 2025, ORT celebrated its 145th birthday as a global education network. This network impacts over 350,000 individuals — Jewish and non-Jewish — annually across more than 40 countries, empowering students and educators with the skills to thrive in the 21st century including the important STEM and robotic fields.

Of note is the organization's dedication to the 15 ORT schools in Ukraine. Since the start of the war in February 2022, ORT provided assistance and support to the students, their families, and the committed educators in these schools so that learning could continue through this difficult period.

Learn more about this incredible force for good in our world. See www.ort.org for more information.

To make a dinner reservation or to arrange for a ride, please contact Lisa Saulles by Tuesday, May 5, at lbsaulles@gmail.com. Cost of the dinner is $40. ■

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TBE events in May

Events and services are both in person and/or virtual. Please see www.templebethemeth.org for full details, location information, and links.

Tot Shabbat Service & Dinner
Fridays at 5:45 p.m.
Join the clergy to celebrate Shabbat with fun activities, stories, songs, and age-appropriate learning for children ages 0–5. Registration requested.

Elementary Shabbat Service & Dinner (every second Friday of the month)
Fridays at 5:45 p.m.
A short service, song session, and community building! Most appropriate for children ages 5–10 and their parents, grandparents, and other adults. Everyone is welcome! Registration requested.

Wine & Cheese Shabbat Reception
Fridays at 6 p.m. (except for the second Friday of each month)

Shabbat Service
Fridays at 6:30 p.m. (every second Friday of the month is at 7:30 p.m.)

Saturday Shabbat service
Saturdays at 10 a.m.

Shabbat morning Torah study
Saturdays at 8:50 a.m.
Join us for this weekly discussion of the Torah portion.

Weekday morning blessings
Weekdays at 9:15 a.m.
Join TBE lay leaders each weekday morning for a short service of song, poetry, and meditation.

Twenty-five-minute mindfulness with Jewish spiritual director Linda Greene
Tuesdays at 8:30 a.m. Zoom room opens at 8:15 a.m. for optional check-in. Blessing and intention setting 8:30–8:35 a.m. Meditate 8:35–9 a.m. Start your day centered and connected.

Queer Torah Study
Tuesdays at 7 p.m.
Join us on Zoom for a discussion of queer themes in the weekly Torah portion! Led by Ari Marcotte, Zelda Marcotte & Ari Smith. Guest leaders welcome! Contact Zelda (zeldamaybiz@gmail.com) for more information.

Back Door Food Pantry
Thursdays, 4 to 7 p.m.

Meditation with Claire Weiner
Thursdays at 5 p.m.
Join Claire Weiner for a 40-minute meditation session.

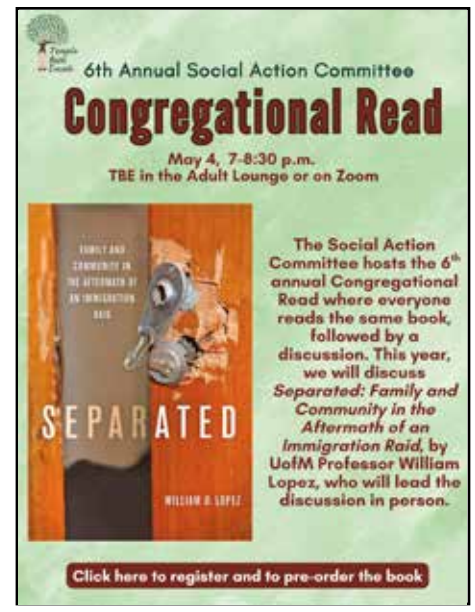
Lunch & Learn with Rabbi Whinston
Fridays at 12 p.m.

Weekly Mahj
Tuesdays at 7:30 p.m.
Wednesdays at 12:30 p.m.

WTBE Gift Shop Open
Fridays at 5:30 p.m. (every second Friday of the month is at 7:30 p.m.)
Washtenaw County's only Judaica Shop!

Graduation Shabbat Service
Friday, May 1, at 6:30 p.m.

6th Annual Congregational Read: *Separated: Family and Community in the Aftermath of an Immigration Raid*, by U of M Professor William Lopez who will attend the event in person. 7 p.m.


6th Annual Social Action Committee
Congregational Read
May 4, 7-8:30 p.m.
TBE in the Adult Lounge or on Zoom
SEPARATED
The Social Action Committee hosts the 6th annual Congregational Read where everyone reads the same book, followed by a discussion. This year, we will discuss Separated: Family and Community in the Aftermath of an Immigration Raid, by UofM Professor William Lopez, who will lead the discussion in person.
Click here to register and to pre-order the book

Jewish Medical Ethics
Tuesdays, May 5, 12, 19, and 26, at 10 a.m.

Jewish Book Club
Thursdays, May 7, 14, 21, and 28, at 11 a.m.

Family Camp
Friday, May 8, at 6:45 p.m.

Leviticus Through a Gendered Lens
Mondays, May 11 and 18, at 12 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.

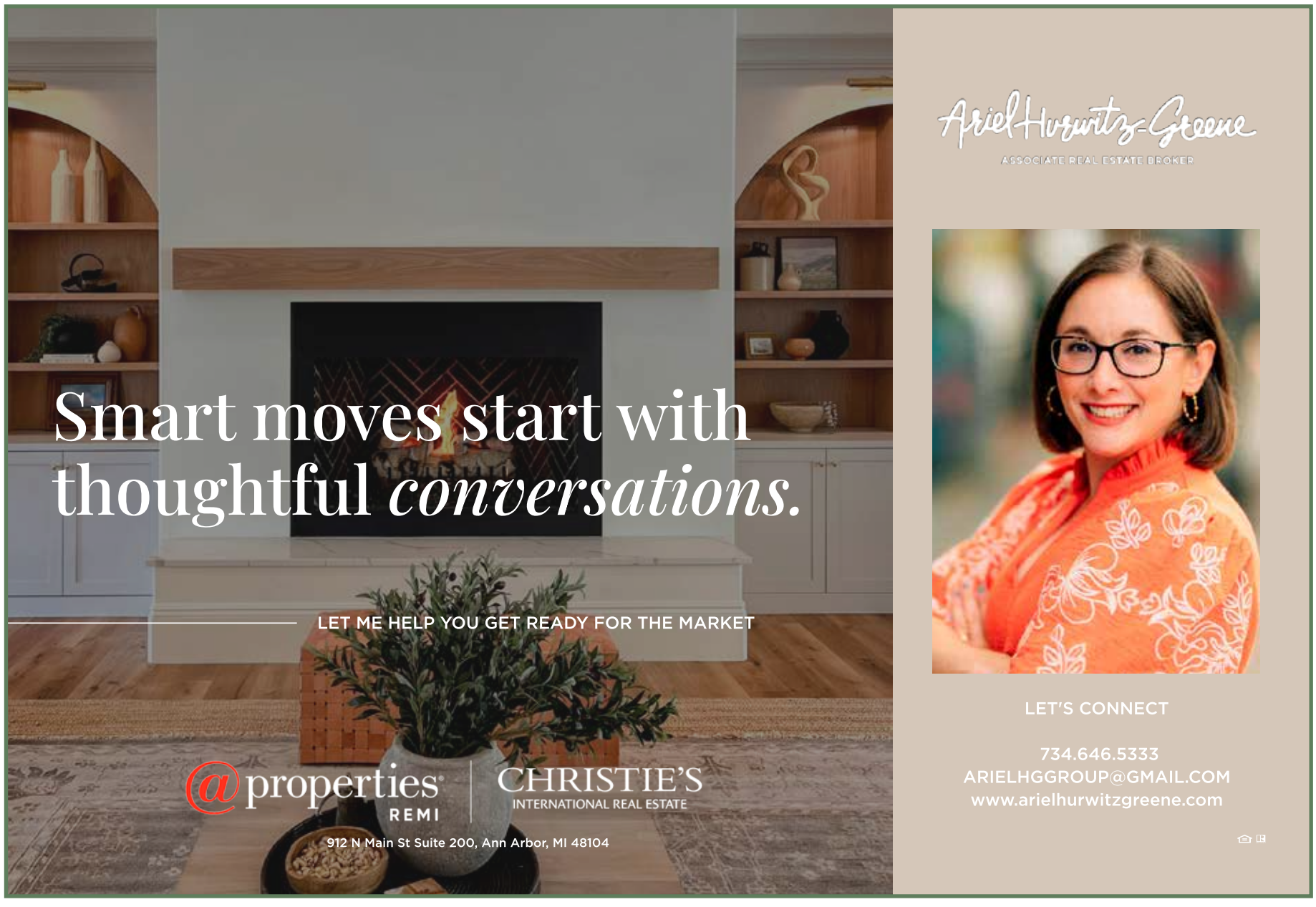
WTBE Fiber Arts
Monday, May 11, at 7 p.m.

WTBE Historical Novel Reading Group
Wednesday, May 13, at 1 p.m.

Choir Shabbat Service
Friday, May 15, at 6:30 p.m.

Monthly Rosh Chodesh Circle
Wednesday, May 20, at 5:30 p.m.

Confirmation Shabbat Service
Friday, May 22, at 6:30 p.m. ■



Investing in the future of local Jewish life

By Osnat Gafni-Pappas, Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor

Sometimes, a member of the local Jewish community wants to strengthen the community and needs a way to put their vision into action. The Jewish Community Foundation of Greater Ann Arbor offers a powerful way to create a lasting impact.

Founded in 1998 as the "planned giving" arm of the Jewish Federation, the Foundation helps individuals establish or contribute to endowment funds that support both current and future community needs. Today, the Foundation manages 70 funds totaling over $11 million, ensuring long-term financial stability for local Jewish organizations and initiatives.

Establishing a new endowment fund requires a minimum contribution of $100,000. However, anyone in the community can choose to contribute to existing funds that support a wide range of community needs, from youth programs and senior services to book festivals, educational programs, and more. A few examples of people and groups who have established existing funds are:

Irene Butter Fund for Holocaust and Human Rights Education, which supports Holocaust & Human Rights Educational Programming

Miriam Ruth Epstein HDS Scholarship Fund, which supports tuition scholarships for the Hebrew Day School of Ann Arbor

Weisbach Family Shabbat Dinner Fund, which supports student Shabbat Dinners at U of M Hillel

Phyllis Herzig Fund for Senior Programming, which supports social and cultural programming in the Ann Arbor Jewish Community for senior adults through the Jewish Community Center of Ann Arbor

The Stark Nemon Youth Services Endowment Fund, which supports the Youth in Crisis Network at Jewish Family Services of Washtenaw County

LiveSecure Community Security Fund, which supports the growing security needs for all Jewish institutions in the community

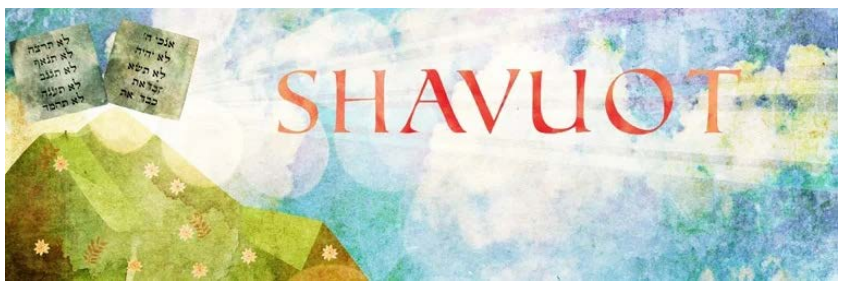
In addition, donors can support the unrestricted endowment funds of many local Jewish organizations. These funds that are not tied to a specific purpose can be accessed at each organization's discretion, providing long-term financial stability, easing operating pressures, and helping ensure these organizations continue to thrive well into the future.

Endowment funds work by being invested for growth, with only a portion of earnings distributed annually. This strategy preserves the principal while providing immediate and regular support. These funds can sustain causes a donor cares about for generations.

For those looking to leave a legacy, the Jewish Community Foundation encourages planned giving beyond endowments, including strategies like bequests and beneficiary designations. For the greater Ann Arbor Jewish community, this legacy work is supported by the Life & Legacy program, which has helped strengthen the community's long-term financial sustainability.

The Jewish Community Foundation makes it easy to give thoughtfully and sustainably, helping donors support the community today and for generations to come.

For a full list of existing endowment funds or for more information about leaving a legacy gift, please contact Osnat Gafni-Pappas at osnat@jewishannarbor.org or visit the Jewish Community Foundation's website at www.jewishannarbor.org/ways-to-give/foundation.■



Trump has forced an impossible choice on American synagogues amid antisemitic attacks

By Joel Swanson

This story was originally published on the Forward *on March 14, 2026. To get the* Forward's *free email newsletters delivered to your inbox, go toforward.com/newsletters.*

The March attack on Temple Israel in West Bloomfield, Michigan, did not occur in a vacuum.

In the prior few months, shots were fired at three congregations in Toronto; an explosion rocked a synagogue in Belgium; and an arsonist caused massive damage to Beth Israel Congregation in Mississippi. Antisemitic incidents in the United States have reached historic highs. The threat is real, it is escalating, and American Jews know it.

Which is why the federal government's decision to use this moment in history to force Jewish communities to choose between their own safety and that of immigrants is so unforgivable.

That choice is being created as part of the government's Nonprofit Security Grant Program, which under President Donald Trump has instituted troubling new changes.

The program was established in 2004 to help houses of worship pay for cameras, barriers, armed guards, and alarm systems, then expanded after the Pittsburgh synagogue massacre in 2018. It has perhaps never mattered more than it does right now. It provides, quite literally, life-saving money. The demand for grants vastly outpaces the supply, with thousands of organizations competing for a fraction of the security funds they need.

Now, those funds come with new strings attached.

Beginning in 2025, the Department of Homeland Security attached sweeping ideological conditions to new security grants. Recipients of new awards must cooperate with Immigration and Customs Enforcement operations, and must also agree not to "operate any programs that advance or promote DEI, DEIA, or discriminatory equity ideology." They additionally must not run any aid program which "benefits illegal immigrants or incentivizes illegal immigration."

When asked to clarify what those conditions mean in practice — whether a synagogue that declares itself a sanctuary for refugees would be disqualified, or whether a congregation offering programming for Jews of color or LGBTQ+ Jews would run afoul of the anti-DEI clause — the federal government's answer has been months of contradictory guidance and confusion.

The terrifying potential consequences of that muddle were thrown into sharp relief by the attack on Temple Israel. Thankfully, no congregants were hurt, and the children in the preschool run by the synagogue all made it home safely.

Many congregations do not have the independent resources to support security protocols as effective as Temple Israel's proved to be. Instead, they rely on the government to help bridge the gap.

But under Trump's second administration, security funding — the money that pays for the tools that may one day save lives — is now a lever to use to force political compliance.

This is of particular significance for Reform Judaism, the largest Jewish denomination in the U.S. and that to which Temple Israel belongs. The movement's commitment to welcoming the stranger, hachnasat orchim — stemming from the commandment to love the stranger, repeated no fewer than 36 times in the Torah — is core to its identity. It is no coincidence that many Reform congregations have declared themselves sanctuaries for refugees.

And it's of particular significance because antisemitic violence is often linked to anti-immigrant sentiment. The deadliest act of antisemitic violence in U.S. history, the 2018 Pittsburgh synagogue shooting, was motivated by hatred toward immigrants, and toward Jewish programs that aid them.

The Trump administration's demand that liberal American Jews choose between a foundational Jewish value and basic safety from violence is heartbreaking. One anonymous rabbi described the dilemma with devastating clarity to JTA: "Money is being given to us on condition that we violate a specific mitzvah. I don't see how we can possibly accept that money."

Rabbi Jill Maderer in Philadelphia put it even more bluntly, saying "Jewish safety requires inclusive democracy and inclusive democracy requires Jewish safety. We do not comply so we will not apply."

These are communities under armed threat forced to choose between their physical safety and their moral integrity. That is a choice that no American religious community should ever have to make. The government's obligation to protect its citizens, especially its most targeted minorities, must not come with an ideological price tag.

What makes this especially galling is the timing. A government shutdown of the Department of Homeland Security, born out of a political standoff over immigration enforcement, is currently halting the review of security grant applications. Synagogues that applied for funding months ago are waiting for approvals that may not come.

They are waiting, in many cases, to find out whether the security upgrades that might have made the difference under circumstances like those that unfolded in Michigan will be funded or not.

There is a word for demanding that a persecuted minority community abandon its values in exchange for protection: extortion. The Trump administration would no doubt dispute that framing. After all, the administration claims to care deeply about Jewish safety. The Temple Israel attack makes clear that it is not enough for the administration to make that claim; it must prove its commitment through action.

It must remove the political conditions from the Nonprofit Security Grant Program. It must let houses of worship be what they are: sanctuaries, not instruments of federal policy.■

Joel Swanson is an assistant professor of religion and Jewish studies at Sarah Lawrence College. He holds a doctorate in the history of Judaism from the University of Chicago, and in addition to academic publications, his work has been published in the Forward, Haaretz, Religion Dispatches, Slate, The Times of Israel, The Jerusalem Post *and the* Jewish Telegraphic Agency.

May Calendar

Always check websites or call for updates before planning to attend anything listed here.

Friday 1 Tonight Count Omer 30
Candle Lighting 8:16 p.m.

Saturday 2 Emor, Tonight Count Omer 31
Havdallah 9:22 p.m.

Sunday 3 Tonight Count Omer 32
JCLP Graduation: At the UM School of Social Work. 10 a.m.
Ann Arbor Jewish Film Festival at the State Theater (AAJFF). Through May 13.
AAJFF: Opening Event: *TOVAH: 50 Years on Broadway, The Life of Tovah Feldshuh.* 1:30 p.m.
AAJFF: *The Pianist's Choice.* 6:30 p.m.

Monday 4 Tonight Count Omer 33
AAJFF: *Sapiro v. Ford: The Jew Who Sued Henry Ford*. 6:30 p.m.

Tuesday 5 Lag b'Omer Tonight Count Omer 34

Wednesday 6 Tonight Count Omer 35
Yidish tish: (Virtual) (Yiddish Conversation & Reading Group): Zoom. About 45 minutes each of conversation and reading. Free and open to all those interested in Yiddish language, literature, and culture, no matter what level of proficiency. For more information email Elliot H. Gertel at egertel@umich.edu at least one day before scheduled meeting day every Wednesday (except major Jewish holidays). 2 p.m.

AAJFF: *The Sea.* 6:30 p.m.

Thursday 7 Tonight Count Omer 36
AAJFF: *The Last Spy.* 6:30 p.m.

Friday 8 Tonight Count Omer 37
Candle Lighting 8:24 p.m.

Saturday 9, Behar-Bechukotai, Tonight Count Omer 38
Havdallah 9:30 p.m.

Sunday 10 Tonight Count Omer 39

Monday 11 Tonight Count Omer 40
AAJFF: *Girls Like Us.* 6:30 p.m.

Tuesday 12 Tonight Count Omer 41
AAJFF: Stay Forte: A Film by Doron Eran. 6:30 p.m.
ORT Spring Dinner. 6 p.m.

Wednesday 13 Tonight Count Omer 42
AAJFF *Yaniv***.** Sponsor Night Closing Event. Morris Lawrence Building Towsley Auditorium. Sponsor Dinner at 6 p.m. and Film Showing at 7 p.m.

Thursday 14 Tonight Count Omer 43
JCC Amster Gallery Reception with Abby Lorkis and Joan Cohen Jones. 6 p.m.

Friday 15, Tonight Count Omer 44
Candlelight 8:31 p.m.
Climate Action Shabbat: At Beth Israel.

Saturday 16, Bamidbar, Rosh Chodesh Iyar, Tonight Count Omer 45
Havdallah 9:39 p.m.

Sunday 17 Tonight Count Omer 46

Monday 18 Rosh Chodesh Sivan Tonight Count Omer 47

Tuesday 19 Tonight Count Omer 48

Wednesday 20 Tonight Count Omer 49
Yidish tish: (Virtual) (Yiddish Conversation & Reading Group, see above): Zoom. 2 p.m.

Friday 22 Tonight Shavuot
Candlelight 8:38 p.m.

Saturday 23, Shavuot
Havdallah 9:47 p.m.

Sunday 24

Monday 25

Tuesday 26

Wednesday 27
Yidish tish: (Virtual) (Yiddish Conversation & Reading Group, see above): Zoom. 2 p.m.
Jewish Federation Annual Meeting. 7 p.m.

Thursday 28

Friday 29
Candlelight 8:44 p.m.

Saturday 30 Naso
Havdallah 9:54 p.m.

Sunday 31
Beth Israel Community Garden Program: Country Farm Park. 10 a.m. ■

Rabbi's corner

Work, then rest

By Rabbi Aharon Goldstein, Chabad of Ann Arbor

On Saturday May 2, we will read the Torah portion, Emor. It contains the command pertaining to the Sabbath: "Six days shall work be done; but the seventh day is a Sabbath of rest... you shall do no manner of work."

Take a look at your average calendar and you'll notice that the first day is Sunday, a day of rest in many countries. The week, therefore, begins with a day of rest.

Sunday, in the Jewish calendar, is a work-day; Saturday, Shabbat, was appointed the day of rest. The week actually begins with work. Only after six days of work will the seventh day be the Sabbath. The precedence of labor before rest indicates that our purpose is not to while away time idly, but rather to work for the betterment of ourselves and our community, in both material and spiritual matters.

It might seem strange that the phrase "shall work be done" is in a passive form. But, actually, it indicates that Judaism advocates a "passive" or slightly aloof attitude toward work. A person's entire interest and enthusiasm shouldn't only be centered around business activities.

Today, many of us have become so totally submerged in our business lives that we have no time for anything or anyone, least of all ourselves. We're "on the job" not only at work but also at home, at leisure. We think, sleep, even pray business.

To caution against this complete preoccupation we have the Divine order, "Six days shall work be done." It is a positive commandment, stating the essential nature of labor, yet transmitting an important clause: Don't become totally preoccupied with work. Keep slightly detached so that during leisure hours one will be able to give attention to personal and family needs, both material and spiritual. ■

Community invited to help prevent elder abuse during June awareness month

By Rachael Dawson-Baglien

Sometimes preventing elder abuse starts with something simple: a neighbor checking in, a bus driver noticing something isn't right, or a friend knowing where to turn for help.

This June, in recognition of World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, Catholic Charities of Washtenaw County (CCWC) is inviting residents across Washtenaw County to take part in a community-wide effort to help protect older adults.

The initiative is part of CCWC's Senior Resource Connect project, which helps older adults and caregivers find trusted local resources before a crisis occurs. Throughout the month, with support provided by AgeWays Nonprofit Senior Services, CCWC staff will provide practical tools and information to help community members recognize potential warning signs of elder abuse and know where to turn for help.

One key part of the campaign is the distribution of "Purple Packets." These resource packets will be placed in libraries, coffee shops, community organizations, and other gathering places across the county. Each packet includes clear, local information about recognizing signs of elder abuse, understanding common risk factors, and connecting older adults with trusted services in Washtenaw County.

CCWC staff will also offer a free one-hour presentation titled "5 Simple Things We Can All Do to Prevent Elder Abuse." The program explores the different forms elder abuse can take and shares practical steps that anyone — neighbors, volunteers, faith groups, and community members — can take to help keep older adults safe and supported.

Presentations are scheduled throughout June at a variety of community locations, including:

St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church

Ypsilanti District Library

Milan Seniors for Healthy Living

Training for drivers with Western Washtenaw Area Value Express (WAVE)

A presentation with the local AARP chapter

CCWC staff will also participate in a dementia-friendly movie screening hosted by Dementia Friendly Washtenaw County on June 10 from 12:30–2 p.m. at Emagine Saline.

Since 2019, the Senior Resource Connect project has worked to make Washtenaw County a more aging-friendly community by helping older adults and caregivers navigate local services. The Senior Resource Connect website (SeniorResourceConnectMI.org) features a searchable directory of more than 500 local resources, an interactive quiz to help residents identify services they may need, a weekly blog that covers topics related to aging and caregiving, and educational content on elder abuse prevention as well as cybersecurity for older adults.

Senior Resource Connect is a program of CCWC and is open to all people in Washtenaw County. For over 65 years, CCWC has been a trusted leader in providing services to older adults in our community. Guided by a commitment to compassion and mercy, it is CCWC's mission to share the love and presence of Christ while honoring the inherent dignity of every person we serve. For more information, visit us at www.ccwcwashtenaw.org.

Community organizations, faith groups, libraries, and local businesses interested in hosting a presentation or receiving Purple Packets are encouraged to reach out.

For more information or to request materials, contact: Rachael Dawson-Baglien, Senior Resource Manager Catholic Charities of Washtenaw County, (734) 971-9781 Ext. 8, rdawsonbaglien@ccwcwashtenaw.org ■

CATHOLIC CHARITIES WASHTENAW COUNTY | Senior Resource CONNECT

Community

A kaboles shabes celebrating Yiddish

By Rabbi Gabrielle Pescador

In March, the Ann Arbor Reconstructionist Congregation offered a Yiddish *kaboles shabes* (Kabbalat Shabbat/welcome Shabbat Friday evening service). The service was created in collaboration with Elena Luchina from the UM Frankel Center for Jewish Studies Yiddish Language Program, Mischa Shwardon from the Yiddische Gas (Yiddish language study group), and musicians and Yiddish enthusiasts from the AARC community. Together, we wove a Friday night experience that celebrated spiritual tradition with Yiddish ancestral history and culture. We were especially excited to bring multiple communities together to open our tent to new people, new voices, and new energies.

Shared language of sound

We began the service and set the tone for the evening with "Shnirele Perele," a Yiddish niggun (wordless song) whose name evokes a "stringing of pearls," a traditional rabbinic way of linking verses across our sacred writings to illuminate deeper meaning. The song reimagines this sensibility as a collective yearning for the coming of the messiah. In a Reconstructionist (and broadly contemporary) frame, we read this not as a literal arrival, but as a longing for a more whole and just world.

The musicians were central to shaping the emotional arc of the service, and worked together in rehearsal to find a shared language of sound and klezmeric feeling that blended traditional davening tunes and Yiddish melodies: Debbie Gombert on accordion and flute, Sue Merritt on clarinet, Laurie White on guitar, Seth Kopald and Margot Neuhaus on percussion, Isaac Meadow on piano, and me on the harp.

AARC member, Danny Steinmetz, contributed to the service with a meaningful dvar Torah.

Emotional archive

Yiddish carries within it the emotional archive of the Jewish people: the humor, the ache, the resilience of everyday life. Bringing Yiddish into Kabbalat Shabbat blurred the boundaries between the liturgical language and structure of the service and the lived experience of carrying Ashkenazic heritage in our bones.

Songs like "Ikh Zing" flowed into "Yedid Nefesh," highlighting how, in rabbinic imagination, romantic love between two human beings can serve as a metaphor for entering an intimate relationship with the Divine. The Yiddish love song, from the 1938 musical *Mamele*, became a doorway into such mystical longing.

This theme came into even sharper focus as we welcomed the Shabbat bride through "Lecha Dodi," set in part to "Chiribim" and the melody of "Tumbalalaika." Elena Luchina offered a beautiful teaching on "Tumbalalaika." She explained that it is a song of courtship not centered on wealth or status, but on affinity. The beloved is the one who understands your riddles, who meets your cleverness with their own.

As we turned to greet the Shabbat bride, this reframing felt especially resonant. The encounter with Shabbat became relational. It asked not what we have, but who we are, and whether we can meet the sacred with presence, curiosity, and depth.

Devotional prayer

We also introduced the congregation to t'khines, personal devotional prayers historically voiced by Jewish women in Yiddish. In a world where many women were not taught Hebrew or given access to formal liturgical language, t'khines offered a way to express concerns of everyday life in the vernacular — prayers for children and family, for health, livelihood, peace, and protection.

In this service, a t'khine accompanied candle lighting, inviting the light to enter not only our homes but our hearts. Later in the service we offered a t'khine published in 1916 in Antwerp, for an interpretive Hashkiveinu (prayer for protection), asking to be sheltered beneath Divine wings, free from fear and suffering.

For the Amidah, I offered a Rabbi's t'khine extending the tradition forward, in which I asked for blessings for the com munity, invoking ancestors, and widening its concern to include all

continues to page 16

Please join us for the
Annual Meeting
of the
Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor

Join us to celebrate a year of
philanthropy,
engagement,
and convening
and to elect the next Board of Directors.

Wednesday, May 27, 2026, 7pm
at the JCC of Greater Ann Arbor

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May events at Beth Israel Congregation

Everyone is welcome to join Beth Israel for services, classes, and events. Services are being held in person and virtually, unless otherwise noted on the calendar. Below is a list of the links to participate virtually in services at Beth Israel. Beth Israel is live streaming services on the Beth Israel YouTube channel (Beth Israel Congregation AA MI). All links are also available on the Beth Israel homepage (www.bethisrael-aa.org). Please note that passwords are used. Contact the office to get the passwords at office@bethisrael-aa.org.

Education Rights Under Pressure: What Michigan Families Need to Know with Brad Dembs & Debra Chopp
Wednesday, May 6, 7 p.m.
Federal protections for students with disabilities are in flux. Two experienced practitioners will break down special education and nondiscrimination laws — and explain what recent federal changes mean for Michigan families navigating this vital area of law. Debra Chopp is a Clinical Professor of Law, Associate Dean for Experiential Education, and the Director of the Pediatric Advocacy Clinic at the University of Michigan Law School. She has been representing families on education-related matters for 20 years. Brad Dembs is the Director of Education Counseling at the Schluter & Hughes Law Firm, PLLC. He has represented families of children with disabilities for over a decade, in both nonprofit and private sectors. Please register through the calendar at Bethisrael-aa.org.

EDUCATION RIGHTS UNDER PRESSURE:
What Michigan Families Need to Know
May 6th, 7-8:30pm
Debra Chopp
Brad Dembs
Debra Chopp is a Clinical Professor of Law, Associate Dean for Experiential Education, and the Director of the Pediatric Advocacy Clinic at the University of Michigan Law School. She has been representing families on education-related matters for 20 years.
Brad Dembs is the Director of Education Counseling at the Schluter & Hughes Law Firm, PLLC. He has represented families of children with disabilities for over a decade, in both non-profit and private sectors.
Federal protections for students with disabilities are in flux. Two experienced practitioners break down special education and nondiscrimination laws -- and explain what recent federal changes mean for Michigan families navigating this vital area of law.
Click to reigster

Spring Hebrew Classes with Milka Eliav

Tuesday, May 5, 5:15–9 p.m.
Come learn Hebrew with Milka Eliav on Tuesday evenings. We have classes for many levels, please see below. Classes will take place on the following dates at Beth Israel: May 5, May 12, (no class May 19), May 26, June 2, June 9, June 16, June 23, June 30. Registration is required through the calendar on our website by April 27 and costs $160 for members, $225 for non-members. Please note that each class must have five students registered to run. Advance registration is required.
5:15–6 p.m. — Intermediate Conversation: This class is meant for people who are comfortable carrying a conversation in Hebrew about mundane topics and are looking to expand their vocabulary, increase their confidence in speaking Hebrew, and gain an understanding of some language structures.

6:15–7 p.m. — Prayer Book Reading: If you can read Hebrew and want to improve your fluency, speed, and confidence, this is the class for you! We will focus on texts from the prayer book and the Jewish Bible, dedicate some class time to discussing meaning and recurring vocabulary, and learn some reading principles to help with fluency and pronunciation. We will use the book *Prayer Book Hebrew, The Easy Way*.

7:15–8 p.m. — Beginning Conversation: This class offers a taste of modern Hebrew for communication. Reading Hebrew is a plus but not a requirement. We will jump right into Hebrew and learn to introduce ourselves, ask questions, describe things like our families, our jobs, and other common topics. We may even learn to order in an Israeli restaurant. Come dip your toes in this modern-ancient language and roll some Hebrew off your tongue!

8:15–9 p.m. — Advanced Conversation: If you can carry on a conversation in Hebrew on various topics, this class is for you. Come join a relaxed and welcoming hour of Hebrew only. Participants talk and read together about a wide range of subjects, while highlighting grammatical points, enriching vocabulary, and exploring cultural references. "Hebrew Table" at its best!

HEBREW LANGUAGE CLASSES AT BIC
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Hebrew Classes for Every Stage of Learning
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7 sessions - $140/members, $195/non-members
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5:15-6:00 Intermediate Conversation
6:15-7:00 Prayer Book Reading
7:15-8:00 Beginning Conversation
8:15-9:00 Advanced Conversation
Tuesdays as Noted Below
5/12, 5/26, 6/2, 6/9, 6/16, 6/23, 6/30
*No class on 5/19
Click to Register by May 5th
*Each class needs at least 5 people registered to run
Questions? Email Melanie at Mgorman@bethisrael-aa.org

Aura of Kabbalat Shabbat
Friday, May 1 and 15, 6 p.m.
A Jewish Renewal inspired singing service led by Rabbi Aura Ahuvia. The choir, dubbed the "Holy Levites," will be holding a rehearsal at 5:30 p.m. leading right up to and seamlessly into services. All are welcome to attend.

A2J Climate Circle Potluck
Friday, May 15, 7 p.m.
Come join with others in the Jewish climate action community for a potluck dinner after Aura of Kabbalat Shabbat Services. To keep our greenhouse gases to a minimum, we request that you bring only plant-based food and avoid disposable containers and serving pieces. Register and sign up to bring a dish through the calendar at Bethisrael-aa.org.

Community Tikkun Leil Shavuot
Thursday, May 21, 7:45 p.m.–Friday, May 22, 5 a.m.
Beth Israel is pleased to host this year's Community Tikkun Leil Shavuot. All are welcome to attend sessions on a variety of Jewish topics, led by members of Ann Arbor congregations. Please contact Jerry Sorokin with any questions at gsorokin@bethisrael-aa.org.

Shavuot Morning Services
Friday, May 22, and Saturday, May 23, 9:30 a.m.
Join us for Shavuot morning services at our synagogue as we celebrate the giving of the Torah. On the second day of Shavuot, our service will include Yizkor, a special memorial prayer to honor and remember our loved ones. We look forward to coming together in prayer, learning, and community during this meaningful holiday.

Youth Service Experience with Rabbi Bair
Saturday, May 2, 11 a.m.
Youth Service Experience with Rabbi Bair now meets weekly at 11 a.m. Shabbat mornings. It is an interactive prayer service with a parsha play. (2nd grade and up. Younger kids are welcome with parent accompaniment). Meets in the M & M Chapel; ends with youth leading Adon Olam in the sanctuary.

Tot Shabbat
Saturday, May 2, 16, & 30, 11 a.m.
Join us for a playful morning of Jewish songs and stories. Challah and grape juice kiddush included. For kids age 1 through 1st grade and parents, but all are welcome to join. Please note that in order to participate in Tot Shabbat, all tots must be accompanied by an adult. Thanks for helping to make this fun and safe for everyone!

Zekelman Holocaust Center Tour
Sunday, May 17, 10:15 a.m.–1 p.m.
Women of Chavurat Nashim and our guests are invited to come together for a meaningful program on Sunday, May 17, at The Zekelman Holocaust Center in Farmington Hills. Our program includes carpooling from Ann Arbor, a docent tour, and a survivor or next generation speaker. The cost is $5 per person. Meet at 9:15 a.m. to carpool, return: 2 p.m. Please register through the calendar at Bethisrael-aa.org and carpool details will follow.

Beth Israel Community Garden Program
Sunday, May 31, 10 a.m.
On May 31, please join the Green Team Task Force at the Beth Israel Community Garden at the County Farm Park from 10–12 a.m. We will have a fun educational session/game on Judaism and Environmentalism, and then use our hands and arms to till, weed, and plant more vegetables. Snacks will be provided. Whether you are an avid gardener or novice, all are welcome. Please register on the Beth Israel website.

Talmud Study with Rabbi Dobrusin via Zoom
Mondays, May 4, 11, & 18, 4 p.m.
The class meets on Zoom on Monday afternoons from 4–5:15. We will read the text in the original Hebrew or Aramaic with an accompanying English translation and discuss the text in English. No familiarity with Hebrew or prior experience studying Talmud is required. This fall and winter, we will be studying from the third chapter of the tractate of Bava Metzia, which addresses issues of the obligations and responsibilities of people who are taking care of objects or animals belonging to another person. All are welcome!

Theology Book Club — Online
Wednesdays at 7 p.m.
Beth Israel Congregation's Theology Book Club welcomes you to join them to read together and discuss books on Jewish thought and beliefs. The books are in English. Contact Paul Shifrin at (248) 514-7276 for more information.

In Person and Online Services

Minyan
Sundays at 9:30 a.m., in the M&M Chapel and online
Sundays–Thursdays at 7:30 p.m., online only

Friday Evening Services — in person and virtual
Kabbalat Shabbat Service at 6 p.m.

Shabbat Morning Services — in person and virtual
Saturdays at 9:30 a.m.

French-ish

By Lonnie Sussman

I have a big trip in May. It's a river trip on the Seine from Paris to Normandy — so of course, I'm interested in French food that I can eat. It's not that I'm so excited about a river cruise or even going to France. My inspiration is my dad, his memory is a blessing. As a 19-year-old soldier in WWII, his unit was sent to France as replacement troops for the Battle of the Bulge. They landed at Normandy, three months after D-Day, and were posted in a village at the top of a cliff to protect the area below. Then they were sent into the forest where the Battle of the Bulge was being fought and he was wounded, shot in the leg. His wound brought him out of the battle and saved his life. The following day the unit was sent back into the forest and ordered to hold their fire. Almost everyone in his unit was killed.

I have always wanted to go to Normandy to show respect for all the soldiers who were there.

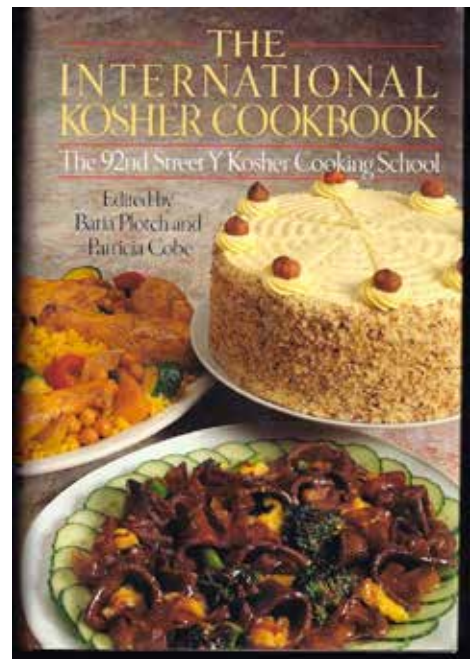
Sea Bream with Spinach and Mustard Sauce

This recipe and the next two are from *The International Kosher Cookbook* from the 92 St. Y Kosher Cooking School and written by André Balog.

It's from a menu for a meal to serve 4.

- 2 egg yolks, at room temperature
- 3 tbs freshly squeezed lemon juice
- 1 rounded tsp Dijon mustard
- Salt and pepper to taste
- ¾ cup olive oil
- 1 shallot, peeled and finely chopped
- Hot pepper sauce, to taste (optional)
- 1 tsp butter or margarine, melted
- 1½ pounds fish fillets. Sea bream is a Mediterranean fish and not available in this country. Good substitutes are red snapper, flounder, or sole fillets.
- 2/3 cup dry white wine
- 1 lb fresh spinach, stems removed

In a medium bowl, blend the egg yolks, 1 tbs lemon juice, mustard, and a pinch of salt with a whisk. Gradually add the olive oil, a little at a time, beating the mixture constantly with the whisk until it thickens,



then add in the remaining 2 tbs lemon juice, shallot, and the hot pepper if you are using it. Set the sauce aside until ready to serve the fish. Spoon some of the sauce on each plate and arrange a round bed of spinach on top and a fish fillet in the center of the spinach.

Preheat oven to 425 degrees and brush the bottom of a baking dish with the melted butter or margarine. Sprinkle the fish fillets with the salt and pepper and place the fillets skin side down in the baking dish. Pour in the wine. Bake the fish for 10 minutes or until it flakes when touched with a fork. Remove from the oven and remove the skins. While the fish is cooking use a large saucepan over high heat and bring 8 cups of water to a boil. Add the spinach, return to boiling, and cook the spinach for 1 minute, uncovered. Drain and cool under cold running water and then squeeze the spinach to remove excess water. Coarsely chop the spinach and place in small bowl and add salt and pepper to taste.

Chicken with 40 Cloves of Garlic

Claudia Roden, photo by Jamie Lau

Not to worry. The garlic is roasted in oil with the olive oil, sugar and salt (see below) and then used again to shmear on the chicken.

- 2 tbs olive oil
- ½ tsp sugar
- Salt to taste
- 40 large cloves garlic, about 4 large heads, separated but unpeeled
- 1 3-pound chicken, cleaned
- Salt and pepper to taste
- ½ cup olive oil
- 2 tbs finely chopped parsley
- 2 tbs finely chopped fresh chives
- 2 tsp finely chopped cilantro (optional)
- 2 tsp finely chopped fresh basil leaves
- 1 tsp chopped fresh thyme leaves
- ½ bay leaf

Use a large roasting pan or Dutch oven and add the olive oil mixture. Roast the garlic first until tender and then coat the chicken in the mixture, placing the roasted garlic all around the chicken and sprinkling all the herbs over the chicken. Cover the pan and bake 1 to 1¼ hours. The chicken should be tender and the juices run clear. Don't forget to remove the bay leaf.

Asparagus with Morels

I'm very excited about this recipe as it includes two of my favorite foods. Our garden has a perennial bed of asparagus and I'm always looking for edible spring mushrooms. If you don't have morels (sad emoji), you can use dried morels soaked in warm water and drained on paper towels to remove the moisture, or any delicious mushroom of your choice. I think cooking the asparagus the way the recipe says (7 minutes) is too long. How long you boil depends on how thick the stalks are. I prefer sautéing them in olive oil or roasting the asparagus in the oven, then sautéing the mushrooms and shallots in a large pan and finally adding the asparagus at the end. The chef recommends the best wine for this dish is Muscat and he insists, "Muscat is the one and only for asparagus."

- 5 oz fresh morels or 2/3 cup dried
- 2 tbs vinegar (optional)
- 2 pounds large asparagus
- ¼ cup butter or margarine
- 6 shallots, peeled and finely chopped
- 4 tsp freshly squeezed lemon juice
- 1 tbs each of chopped parsley and chopped fresh chives

Make sure the fresh morels or other mushrooms are clean. If not, soak them in large bowl of cold water mixed with vinegar for 3–4 minutes. Then drain on the paper towels until the moisture is gone. I've always removed the bottom 2–3 inches of the stem of the asparagus and this recipe also calls for that. It is the tough part of the stem, and you can save those pieces to throw into a soup for flavor, although I don't think they are edible. The chef calls for boiling 8 cups of salted water, adding the asparagus, and cooking them for 7 minutes or even longer if needed, and then removing them to a warm plate. Then heat a skillet, add the margarine or butter, and cook the asparagus another 4 minutes, shaking the pan frequently and adding salt and pepper to taste. Then melt more margarine or butter and add the mushrooms with more salt and pepper and cook over medium heat for 6–10 minutes and pour them over the asparagus. Finally, add the shallots and sauté for 2–3 minutes. Serve the dish with lemon juice, scattering the shallots and chopped herbs on top.

Almodrote de Berengena

The Book of Jewish Food by Claudia Roden

Serves 8

Clearly this is not a French name for the recipe. It is a Turkish dish and is similar to a dish in Spain. The Court of Inquisition knew this dish had a Jewish connection and they thought that the Christian converts who ate it were Jewish. There is a similar dish in Provence, France called "Papeton D'Aubergines," and Claudia Roden writes that she wonders if there is a connection. So, maybe this is a French inspired dish.

- 4 lb eggplants
- 8 oz feta cheese
- 2 eggs, lightly beaten
- 2 large slices white bread, crusts removed, soaked in water and then squeezed dry
- 1 cup Gruyere
- 5 tbs clear oil

Roast and then cool in order to peel the eggplants and drain as much liquid as you can.

Chop the flesh in a bowl or use a wooden spoon to mash it. The food processor changes the texture, and you don't want that. In another bowl mash the feta cheese with a fork and add the eggs, the bread, and most of the Gruyere (save 2–3 tbs for later), and 4 tbs of oil. Beat well. Add the eggplants and mix well. Pour the mixture into an oiled baking dish and sprinkle the top with 1 tbs of oil and remaining grated cheese. Bake at 350 degrees for about 1 hour until the dish is lightly colored. Some switch the eggplant for chopped zucchini as an alternative. ■

Siam Square, Thai mainstay

By Candace Bulkley and Trina Fuller

Candace and Trina became friends in the Temple Beth Emeth adult b-mitzvah class that graduated in 2022. They will be honing their palates, visiting, and writing about a variety of independent, locally owned Washtenaw County restaurants, catering to a variety of dietary preferences.

There is no shortage of Thai restaurants in Washtenaw County, and we have visited a few for this publication. After many long years in an increasingly shabby hotel, Ann Arbor Thai cuisine mainstay Siam Square moved across town to a lovely location in the Colonnade Shops (formerly occupied by V Kitchen). Siam Square has been part of the Ann Arbor community since 1996 and in its current location since late 2024. Bright and airy with an Asian flair, the space is calm and welcoming.

We were seated in a cozy booth and while we perused the extensive menu, we put in an order for the Siam Square Sampler. We anticipated enjoying a little fried food indulgence and wanted a taste of the house favorite appetizers. The platter arrived quickly and piping hot with an accompanying sweet chili dipping sauce. The crispy spring rolls were filled with fresh tasting green cabbage, carrots, and bean sprouts, and the karee puffs, crispy pastry triangles filled with potatoes, onion, carrots and peas with a touch of curry spices, were the standouts. The fried wonton, filled with ground chicken and Thai spices, surprisingly lacked any discernible flavor. The fried tofu not only suffered from the lack of seasoning, but it was overcooked too, and wasn't good enough to justify eating fried food, unfortunately. Thankfully that wasn't the end of our Thai journey.

We tried to order something from each corner of the menu, starting with the noodle section, where we selected Pad Thai. There were 2 versions offered — American and Siam (Thai style). We decided to branch out a bit and try the traditional Siam version. According to the menu, the main difference is the addition of Tamarind in the sauce. The dish was lovely in its presentation, but oddly the ground peanuts were served on the side. The noodles were cooked nicely and were a bit more toothsome than the softer, perhaps overcooked noodles we are accustomed to being served in town. The sweet/sour flavor of tamarind was subtle and very pleasant. Unfortunately, we chose the tofu as our protein, and it was the same over cooked cubes as the appetizer sampler. It was interesting to try something a bit different and next time we'll order it with a different protein choice.

Having a curry dish at a Thai restaurant is a necessity! One member of our tasting duo is not a fan of spicy food, so we consulted our server who was able to adapt the normally spicy curry to a milder flavor. We had trouble picking between the options including green, red, and yellow curries. We were glad to have been guided to the Massaman curry — considered to be the king of curries due to the warm spices like cardamom, cinnamon, and cumin, enhanced with tamarind and fortified with rich coconut milk. Thankfully, the curry was appropriately mild flavored, the braised chicken was tender and the vegetables — potatoes, carrots, onion, and peanuts — gave this saucy dish a bit of heft served over steamed white rice.

As an entree, we chose the spicy basil beef, with a chili garlic sauce. We were delighted when it arrived with a rainbow of vegetables and a sprinkling of fresh Thai basil, which has an anise-like quality. The chili garlic sauce was deeply flavored and complex. The plentiful and vibrant vegetables were perfectly prepared to a tender crisp. The steamed rice did its job perfectly and didn't allow any of the sauce to be wasted.

The surprise standout of our meal was the cucumber salad. Sliced cucumbers were accompanied by a mild, slightly sweet rice vinegar and slivers of shallots that added a little punch, topped by ground peanuts. It was fresh, light, and really refreshing. The simplest of ingredients once again are elevated into a standout dish.

Khao niao mamuang — salty sweet sticky rice with fresh mango — was the just-right end to our meal. Perfectly ripe sliced mango, toasted sesame seeds, and glutinous rice tossed with a mixture of sweet and salty coconut cream, accompanied by a pitcher of extra warm coconut cream on the side — because who doesn't like a little extra sauce? We left full, but took home enough leftovers to feed a family the next night!

Siam Square is definitely finding their footing. We wish them well and many successful years in their new location. Our service was pleasant and efficient. We certainly appreciated the server communicating to the kitchen to keep the spices to a dull roar per our request. There is so much more to explore on the Siam Square menu — so much food, so little time! ■

Siam Square 734.975.4541

883 W. Eisenhower, Ann Arbor

siamsquareannarbor.com

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More good days, together: A mission for May

By Roya Rieden and Megan Carmen with Thrive Counseling at Jewish Family Services

JFS Thrive Counseling is joining Mental Health America for May is Mental Health Month with a simple goal: to help people have more good days, together. The 2026 campaign is about meeting people where they are and recognizing that "good" looks different for everyone.

Here is how you can join us in having more good days, together:

Define What "Good" Means for You:

"Good" doesn't have to mean happy or productive. It can mean calm, neutral, comfortable, manageable, or something else. It can change over time. It's different for everyone, and only you can define what a good day looks like to you.

Care For Your Whole Self:

Our sleep, stress, relationships, nutrition, environment, and other health conditions all impact — and are impacted by — our mental health. Even when we can't change everything, noticing what we can influence is important for our well-being. Whether it's finding ways to move that you enjoy, connecting with your community, or remembering to drink water — small wins matter.

Work Together:

Having more good days isn't a solo mission. Check in with friends, colleagues, and loved ones to see how they're feeling — simple, honest conversations are a great way to support the people you care about. Just a few moments of connection can reduce stress and anxiety, and remind us we're not the only ones feeling what we're feeling.

Find Your Own Path:

Mental health is deeply personal, and what works for one person may not work for another. It's important to explore what sparks joy, brings you peace, or helps you feel good. Remember that relaxation, hobbies, and creative pursuits are crucial for wellness!

Nationally, one in four adults experience mental health concerns annually, with children and youth following closely behind (one in five). From daily stressors to traumatic grief and loss, Thrive clinicians are actively helping individuals across the life span develop coping strategies, build self-awareness, and manage emotions more effectively so that their experiences are more positive and hopeful.

In recent years, the pressure faced by youth to connect with others and find belonging on top of their academic concerns has caused a noticeable increase in social anxiety and stress around peers. In addition to offering individual counseling to youth, Thrive offers several initiatives to support youth in connecting with their peers and personal wellbeing.

Thrive is hosting a six-week, drop-in style Dungeons and Dragons inspired group to challenge social anxiety, foster social connections, and build social skills in a supportive, non-judgmental, and affirming space. Through the use of collaborative storytelling, youth ages 13–16 will work to conquer their anxiety and build confidence to "roll for initiative" in their everyday life.

For Jewish teens, everyday struggles are compounded by moving through a world where they can feel isolated, misunderstood, or under attack. A four-part series was developed by JFS staff to help teens navigate the impacts of rising antisemitism by facilitating honest conversation about shared experiences and feelings, which are met with practical strategies for building strength and resilience.

A group focusing on health masculinity for boys and young men is also available at Thrive. Intended to provide a safe space to address unhealthy stereotypes around masculinity, this program uses guided conversations to encourage young men to discuss their feelings and current struggles while also learning skills to navigate everyday situations. Through improved communication, conflict management, and awareness of regulating their own emotions, young men can be empowered to grow together to support themselves and each other.

Thrive Counseling will continue to meet people where they are through trauma-informed, culturally responsive care so that everyone has the chance to experience more good days, together.

To seek out services with Thrive, call 734-436-4249 to complete a brief screening over the phone or find us at JFSAnnArbor.org/Thrive to complete the online form. ■

Alicia Jo Rabins and Allie Rosenberg play for JCLP and friends

On Sunday April 12, the Jewish Communal Leadership Program of the U of Michigan School of Social Work hosted a warm, lively concert with writer, musician, performer, and feminist Torah teacher Alicia Jo Rabins. Rabins was joined by JCLP student Allie Rosenberg for the memorable evening at The Common Cup café. Rabins tours internationally with *Girls in Trouble*, her indie-folk song cycle about women in Torah.

Allie Rosenberg (stage name of Allie Economou) makes indie folk for people who don't trust easy answers. She is graduating from the JCLP program this month. You can read more about her on page 13.

ALICIA JO RABINS
W/ ALLIE ROSENBERG
SUN 4/12
6PM
FREE & OPEN TO ALL!
"RABINS WRITES AS IF SHE'S IN CONVERSATION WITH THE DIVINE ITSELF." -REZA ASLAN
WHEN WE'RE BORN WE FORGET EVERYTHING
ALICIA JO RABINS
@ THE COMMON CUP
1511 WASHTENAW AVE
BOOK LAUNCH + GIRLS IN TROUBLE CONCERT
(FEMINIST INDIE-FOLK ABOUT BIBLICAL WOMEN)
JEWISH COMMUNAL LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

Celebrating the JCLP's graduating cohort

By Morgan Hesse

U-M's Jewish Communal Leadership Class of 2026: Jordyn Lash, Natalie Fenwick, Sam Tick-Raker, Allie Economou, Izzy Slesnick, Haley Mozen, Rebecca Rich

As the school year comes to a close for U-M's School of Social Work, the Jewish Communal Leadership Program (JCLP) wants to recognize their seven graduating MSW students. The JCLP class of 2026 hails from around the country with interests spanning the entirety of the field of social work, yet they all share a common passion and respect for Jewish communal work. This year, they have been role models to the first-year cohort in their weekly professional development seminar, taken on organizational positions in community- and campus-wide events, and become true leaders both in and outside of their MSW classes. The JCLP is proud of what these students have accomplished and confident that they will go on to be thoughtful, change-making members and leaders of their communities.

Born and raised near San Francisco, Allie Economou graduated from the University of California and then relocated to New Orleans where she worked as an Immigration Paralegal and as an educator in the Jefferson Parish school district. Passionate about mental health awareness and health promotion, Allie is now exploring the intersection of Judaism and social justice through the JCLP. She also writes and performs her own music which explores themes of identity, intimacy, and expectation with philosophical curiosity. After graduation, Allie will be going on to work in private practice as a therapist and will be finding a way to interweave her musical interests with her interest in helping people find meaning and deep fulfillment in their lives.

Natalie Fenwick grew up in Salt Lake City, Utah, where she was very involved in the small Jewish Community. She attended Brandeis University and graduated in 2021. After graduating with a BA in Sociology, Natalie worked at Big Sister Association of Greater Boston as a Match Support Specialist and Program Manager. She is pursuing the Interpersonal Practice in Integrated Health, Mental Health, and Substance Abuse pathway in the MSW program and she hopes to find a career that involves sexual health and sex education. Natalie currently has a job at SAPAC (the Sexual Assault Prevention and Awareness Center) on U-M's campus and is learning a lot. In her free time Natalie enjoys reading, thrifting, and spending time outside.

Jordyn Lash was born and raised in Metro Detroit. She graduated from the University of Michigan in 2024 with a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and completed the Ross Cappo Sales Track. Jordyn is pursuing the Interpersonal Practice in Integrated Health, Mental Health, and Substance Abuse pathway while also completing the Certificate of Entrepreneurship and Innovation. She hopes to use her degree to become a therapist. Being part of a cohort of Jewish social workers through the JCLP has allowed her to reflect on how Judaism has guided her to this profession and shapes her approach as a therapist. Outside of work and school, Jordyn enjoys spending time with family and friends, going on long walks, traveling, and visiting art fairs and farmers' markets.

Haley Mozen was born and raised in the Jewish community of Metro Detroit. In 2024, she graduated with honors from the University of Michigan and earned her Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and a minor in Crime and Justice. Post-graduation, Haley began working as a psychometrician for the Rochester Center for Behavioral Medicine. Haley is now pursuing the Interpersonal Practice in Integrated Health, Mental Health, and Substance Abuse pathway and aspires to be a clinical psychotherapist for children and adolescents. She is particularly interested in working with challenges such as anxiety, depression, disordered eating, food allergies, and trauma.

Sam Tick-Raker was born and raised in San Francisco, California. He graduated in 2019 from the University of California, Davis, with a major in Psychology and a minor in History. Before beginning his MSW, Sam was employed by Seneca Family of Agencies as a Mental Health Counselor in a middle school and high school in Berkeley, working with students who have emotional and behavioral challenges. Sam is pursuing the Interpersonal Practice in Integrated Health, Mental Health, and Substance Abuse Pathway, and the JCLP holds extra meaning for him: his mother was a member of the JCLP in one of the program's earlier iterations, and he loves being able to continue her legacy. Moving forward in his career, Sam hopes to work to bring more young men into therapeutic spaces. Outside of school, Sam enjoys hiking, camping, playing tennis and basketball, and cooking!

Rebecca Rich was born and raised in Bethesda, Maryland, and moved to West Bloomfield, Michigan, in 2019. She graduated from Brandeis University in 2022, earning her Bachelor of Arts in Near Eastern and Judaic Studies with a minor in Arabic Language, Literature, and Culture. Rebecca is excited to be earning her Master's in Social Work via the Community Change pathway and hopes to use this degree to create and foster meaningful intercultural spaces within and beyond the Jewish community, making sure there is room for everyone at the table. The JCLP has inspired her to approach working in the Jewish world rom a people-first perspective and to prioritize fostering diversity and inclusion in Jewish spaces. In her spare time, she enjoys singing, spending time in nature, watching TV and movies, and spending quality time with her friends and family.

Izzy Slesnick was born and raised in Ohio. Izzy wanted something different for her undergraduate years and decided to study at Michigan State University, where she graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology and a minor in Youth and Society in December of 2023. Izzy is pursuing the Integrated Health, Mental Health, and Substance Abuse pathway and has interests in working with children and families in nonprofit and hospital settings. She hopes to secure a job as a behavioral health clinician in that realm upon graduating this May. The JCLP has impacted her future goals by showing her how to bring her values to the table and create meaningful dialogue with communal leaders around current events. Outside of school, Izzy enjoys hiking, playing pickleball, and spending time with friends and family.

As these students enter the next phase of their lives and continue on their social work career paths, they remain connected to the JCLP through its vast alumni network. From mentoring future cohort members to attending alumni seminars, these young professionals have many ways to keep engaging with the JCLP.

In the spirit of celebrating the accomplishments and promising futures of the Jewish Communal Leadership Program Class of 2026, community members are invited to attend JCLP's annual Graduation Ceremony on May 3, from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. at U-M's School of Social Work. All are welcome and a dairy Zingerman's brunch will be served. Find further details and RSVP at https://myumi.ch/bVe9k. ■

A2J Climate Circle

HDS creates collaborative community garden

By Orit Aviran, Hebrew Day School

Orit Aviran

Hebrew Day School of Ann Arbor is expanding its environmental programming with the launch of a new Community Garden. The initiative marks the next phase in the school's longstanding commitment to sustainability and environmental education.

This project is made possible through the generous support of the Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor and the Zelma Weisfeld Fund. The garden is a collaborative effort, bringing together partners from the Jewish Community Center (JCC) and Jewish Family Services (JFS) to create a shared space for growth and learning.

While Hebrew Day School is already a certified Green School and integrates daily sustainable practices such as school-wide composting and teaching the values of Shomrei Adamah (protectors of the earth), this new garden will create a physical "living laboratory" on campus. It will provide students and the broader community with a hands-on space for agricultural education and intergenerational connection.

Call for volunteers

The school is currently seeking participants to join a Garden Leadership Team. This group will be responsible for the initial planning, design, and ongoing maintenance of the garden space.

The project is open to all community members, regardless of gardening experience — if you can hold a watering can, you're in! We are looking for individuals interested in outdoor education, sustainable design, or simply helping the school grow its green footprint.

We also welcome high schoolers interested in summer volunteering.

Interested in joining the team? Please contact Tamar Jacobson at TJacobson@hdsaa.org to learn more or to sign up for the first planning meeting. ■

Prayer services and climate action

By Bill Parkus, Temple Beth Emeth member

Taking action against global warming is at the heart of what it is to be a Jew. It fits in so well to our liturgy that recognizes the importance and grandeur of God's creation of the universe and our stewardship responsibility to care for our planet throughout time. God's preference for natural creation is a testament to God's power, wisdom, and divine order.

Our efforts to modify and change God's great works is where we have strayed and gotten into trouble. We have destroyed too much of God's creation — killed too many trees and other natural land cover. On the sixth day, God created humans after God's likeness and made us the stewards of the earth. We have used that designation far too long as permission from the heavens to plow under natural areas and convert them to pavement and structures.

Psalm 19:1–2 illustrates God's creative process of speaking the world into existence until humans were created on the sixth day. The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of His hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge.

The Evening Shabbat Service, Kabbalat Shabbat: "Welcoming Shabbat" is a cycle of six psalms that represent the six days of creation, enjoining all creation to sing out the praises of God. God's creative power is revealed in the world around us; God's sovereignty is over all nature and all nations.

The Evening Service, Maariv Aravim: "Who brings on evening" is a prayer to Adonai recognizing the grandeur of God's creative design, spoken into being, which controls the movement of darkness and light, and sets the courses for the stars and heavenly bodies.

The role of religious services in fostering climate action cannot be overemphasized. It can help establish a higher personal value for protecting the environment and promoting the reduction of climate warming. Let our Jewish liturgy guide you in your climate activism. ■

Community-wide climate-action Shabbat service & potluck

By Michael S. Simon, Beth Israel Congregation, Green Team

The Ann Arbor Jewish Climate Circle (A2J CC), a coalition of Washtenaw County Jewish organizations, invites you to join us for our fourth community-wide Climate Action Shabbat. Whether your organization is part of the coalition or not, we would be delighted to welcome you.

Grounded in the Jewish value of tikkun olam, our shared responsibility to repair the world, A2J CC brings our community together to learn, connect, and take meaningful action on climate change. All are warmly invited to attend.

We'll gather for a joyful and inspiring evening beginning with a Jewish Renewal-inspired singing service led by Rabbi Aura Ahuvia. Her choir, the "Holy Levites," will hold an open rehearsal at 4:30 p.m., which will flow seamlessly into services at 6 p.m. During the service, Rabbi Aura will reflect on how Jewish tradition can both guide and energize our commitment to climate action.

Following services, we'll continue the evening together with a community potluck dinner in the 2010 Washtenaw building next door. In the spirit of care for both people and planet, we ask that all dishes be vegetarian and nut-free. Compostable tableware, challah, and wine/grape juice will be provided.

Beth Israel's well-established composting system allows us to minimize waste, and over dinner we'll have the opportunity to connect and share ideas about how, as individuals and as a community, we can continue building a more sustainable and hopeful future.

Event Details

Beth Israel Congregation
Friday, May 15
2000 Washtenaw Ave
Service: 6:00–7:00 pm (Main Building)
Potluck Dinner: 7:00–8:30 pm (2010 Washtenaw)
Please plan to drop off your potluck dish at 2010 Washtenaw before the service begins.
Sign up at: bethisrael-aa.org/event/a2j-potluck.html
For more information: info@a2j-climatecircle.com ■

Did You Know...

Native Plant Expo & Marketplace

Shop for Michigan native plants from several Michigan native plant growers, learn how to establish and maintain native landscapes, and connect with companies specializing in planning native landscapes for residents in Washtenaw County.

Saturday, June 6, 9 a.m.–1 p.m. at Washtenaw Farm Council Grounds, 5055 Ann Arbor-Saline Road. Learn more at washtenawcd.org/native-plant-expo.

You can dispose of hazardous waste for free in Washtenaw County

Proper hazardous waste management is essential for climate health. It stops the emission of harmful greenhouse gases, such as methane, from landfills and reduces the energy demand of manufacturing through effective recycling. Beyond air quality, it prevents toxic leachate from contaminating groundwater and soil, ensuring a safer, more sustainable ecosystem. Get more detailed info at www.washtenaw.org/287/Household-Hazardous-Waste-Disposal. ■

For this unconventional Jewish organization, tradition takes a back seat to community

By Noah Hirsch-Rechter

This story was originally published on the Forward *on March 25, 2026. To get the* Forward's *free email newsletters delivered to your inbox, go toforward.com/newsletters.*

Despite a temporary boost after October 7 — the so-called "solidarity spike" — traditional Jewish community in the United States has been in decline for at least a generation.

Synagogue attendance, regular Shabbat practice, paying congregational dues — never have these seemed less appealing to more Jews.

This isn't all that surprising. American Jewry is evolving — interfaith households are up, support for Israel is down — and the onus, to a degree, is on the Hillels and Jewish Community Centers and large metropolitan synagogues to respond to these changes.

Yet the growth of a group like Judaism Unbound, a digitally-savvy Jewish organization founded in part as an alternative to the mainstays of American-Jewish life, would seem to suggest that, in certain quarters, the usual offerings just aren't cutting it.

What the organization's members share above all, said Lex Rofeberg, its senior Jewish educator, is a failure to connect meaningfully with "classic Jewish institutions."

Unbounders — Rofeberg's somewhat hokey name for the group's members — are on the fringes of Jewish community for several reasons: among them, political beliefs; accessibility; interfaith dynamics; or a perceived knowledge deficit. There are, for example, a disproportionately high number of converts and Jews from interfaith backgrounds in the organization.

Lisa Heineman, a professor of Gender, Women's and Sexuality Studies at the University of Iowa, and a longtime Unbounder, told me over email that despite her repeated efforts to get involved with Jewish institutions, she "simply felt like an outsider — I didn't know the rituals, couldn't play Jewish geography, didn't fit into the ethnic Yiddishkeit."

For many Unbounders, distance from mainstream Jewish community is not just figurative, but literal. "There's a ton of creativity off the beaten path," Heineman wrote. "And Judaism Unbound has been alert to what we have to gain by listening to Jews in places like Iowa, Oklahoma, or Mississippi — and by really integrating them into their conception of American Jewish life."

An unconventional approach

Judaism Unbound — or the "Institute for the Next Jewish Future," the group's lesser-used official name — has embraced what Rofeberg calls "digital-first" Judaism, the better to reach those Jews in far-flung locations. With occasional exceptions, most events take place online. "Digitally, you are able to reach everywhere," Rofeberg said. "People who are ostracized, people who are marginalized in whatever ways, find us. We had a lot of success very quickly online in ways that could not have happened offline."

The events themselves — in keeping with the group's anti-institutional bent — are sold as a departure from tradition.

"To be a Judaism Unbounder," Rofeberg said, "is not to presume that the status quo is eternal." One recent program, for instance, explored books from the Apocrypha, the liturgical texts that, though hugely influential, were never accepted into the biblical canon. The "ApocryFest," as the event was known, was typical of an Unbound program: zany and experimental, deeply if unconventionally Jewish, and, in truth, a little intellectually demanding.

Another of Unbound's principal offerings is the "UnYeshiva," a virtual beit knesset of sorts that offers online classes on an increasingly sprawling suite of topics, such as "Genesis: People and Solidarity in Bereshit"; "Every Body Beloved: A Jewish Embrace of Fatness"; and "Jews and Revolution: Socialists, Anarchists, and Radicals in the Modern World."

The "UnYeshiva" debuted in 2021 and was so well-received that Rofeberg and co. added a longer certificate program for the especially dedicated. These can take up to three years to complete, and consist of four separate classes, followed by a so-called capstone project, which the organization's website describes as "a unique expression of each student's holy work in the world."

Heineman's capstone project was a day-long, genre-spanning workshop — art, text study, meditation — that invited participants to reflect on a "path to a meaningful Jewish future." That Heineman had had a previous capstone proposal shot down, on the grounds that her idea was too conventional, captures Judaism Unbound's animating spirit, its insistence that participants innovate and experiment.

This programming is, suffice it to say, atypical, not least when set against the broader American-Jewish landscape. "Our premise from the get-go," Rofeberg told me, "is that it's very hard for existing legacy organizations to drastically change what they do in ways that will reach a new constituency, when they also have their own constituency."

Matt Perry, a current UnYeshiva student, agrees. "If there's one idea that I've noticed many participants perhaps share," he wrote, "it might be the belief that a revolution is unlikely to emerge from within existing Jewish structures."

UnBound, through the airwaves

For all the UnYeshiva's successes, the organization's most popular venture remains its first: its eponymous podcast, hosted by Rofeberg and, until very recently, Dan Liebenson, Judaism Unbound's founder. (Liebenson has stepped back from the organization's day-to-day affairs to focus on a new Jewish venture.)

Both Perry and Heineman came to Judaism Unbound through the podcast, which launched in March 2016, and has since been downloaded over 3 million times. Heineman compared its array of guests and topics to "entering Narnia."

In an era of ideological insularity, guests have run pretty much the full gamut of serious opinion. To name a few: Sarah Hurwitz, Peter Beinart, Shai Held, Danya Ruttenberg, *Hey Alma* founder Molly Tolsky. "Week after week," Heineman told me, "I'd discover a new book, a new musician, a new activist organization, a new online educator — all working on this incredibly exciting project of re-thinking and re-invigorating Judaism."

Rofeberg, for his part, wasn't always so satisfied with the podcast. For a while, he felt it was creating a kind of epistemic distance between hosts and listeners. "Other than listening to us and emailing us," he said, "they weren't able to really actively participate."

In 2023, the organization hired Miriam Terlinchamp, an Ohio-based rabbi, as executive director. Rofeberg credits her with introducing a less top-down pedagogical vision, and today the group has "more spaces where our people can come up with their own experiments," he said. It hosts monthly Shabbat gatherings — online, naturally — during which participants explore one prayer in depth. There's also an annual Shavuot event, Shavuot Live, a 24-hour-long Zoom gathering that draws hundreds of Unbounders and generates lengthy discussions in the event's chatroom.

"In every respect, we're trying to broaden who Judaism Unbound is," Rofeberg said. "We're not dictatorial, right?"

A post-October 7 boost

The organization has grown sharply, especially of late, precisely because it hasn't changed all that much. It's always been a little counter-cultural and vaguely transgressive; it's long suggested that Jewish life has passed over vital constituencies; and it's consistently held that "the oldest Jewish tradition," in Rofeberg's phrase, "is upending Jewish tradition."

The salient difference recently — read: since October 7 — is that more Jews have come around to that interpretation. "We've had a lot of people find our work in the last few years, because more people than before feel alienated from other organizations," Rofeberg said.

Concern over Israel's actions in Gaza certainly helps explain this shift. As Rofeberg conceded, Judaism Unbound welcomes anti- and non-Zionists "in a Jewish world that largely doesn't."

The organization doesn't have an official stance vis-a-vis Zionism. ("We're a space that does not define itself with any 'ism," Rofeberg said.) One of its more impressive accomplishments, in fact, is gathering together under a single banner, albeit a virtual one, Jews who would otherwise scarcely interact.

In short, Judaism Unbound is that often-invoked-but-harder-to-realize idea of a big tent, where different beliefs mingle freely but are held together by a set of unifying values. For many, therefore, it has been a refuge from the division that has lately defined much of organized Jewish life.

Yet, for Perry, it's more than that. "Over time, and combined with other semi-aligned efforts," he wrote, "it has the potential to transform the Jewish world. ■

Obituaries

The WJN prints obituaries, memories, and eulogies free of charge for family members of Washtenaw Jewish community members as a service to the community and to honor the lives of those who have passed away. When local congregations send condolence notices to the WJN, the editor searches for obituaries online. Also, community members are invited to send obituaries to the editor.

Elaine Saper, 78, of Ann Arbor, Michigan, died on April 2. Cherished mother of Leslie (Amy) Biegel and Jill Biegel. Treasured grandmother of Nora Biegel and Josh Biegel. Loving sister of Dr. Joel Saper (Marjorie Winters). Dear daughter of the late Jeanette and the late Leonard Saper. Also survived by many loving cousins, nieces, nephews, and friends.

Funeral services were held Tuesday, April 7, at Beth Israel Congregation of Ann Arbor. Interment at Beth Israel Memorial Gardens in Arborcrest Memorial Park. Contributions may be directed to the American Cancer Society.

Jules Lewy (June 23, 1953–March 13, 2026). Husband of the late and beloved Joanna Slone. Loving father of Ira Slone Lewy. Dear brother and brother-in-law of Fran Lewy Berg and Mark Berg, brother-in-law of Cathy and Richard Vogel, Paula and Simon Jeckell, and Abi Slone and Megan Richards. Loved uncle of Joey, Aaron, Max, and Cara. Dear friend to Michelle and Stan Flax, and Brian Simon and Cheryl Glassman. Jules was a respected tax lawyer who started his career at Fraser and Beatty and remained with the firm (Denton's) until his retirement.

Jules was born in Montreal and was a graduate of McGill University where he received an Honours BA (Bachelor of Arts in Economics and Sociology) in 1972, BCL (Bachelor of Civil Law) in 1975, and LLB (Bachelor of Common Law) in 1976. While at McGill, Jules was president of the McGill Liberals and a Vice President of the Liberal Party of Canada. As well, Jules was the President of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong from 1988 to 1989. From 1993 to 1999 Jules was the Managing Partner of Fraser Milner Casgrain's North York office.

While in practice, Jules was a frequent speaker at many legal conferences and the author of numerous articles on tax, trust, and corporate issues. In addition, Jules was a co-editor of the CCH Canadian Tax Reporter and the editor of *CCH Canadian Transfer Pricing, 2nd Edition*.

Jules was an instructor in the Tax Section of the Ontario Law Society's Bar Admission Course and a special lecturer in the Advanced Tax Course at the University of Windsor Faculty of Law for many years. Jules retired from Dentons Canada LLP in 2015. Jules has been a member of the Advisory Board, Finance and Audit Committee, and Governance Committee of Burnbrae Farms Limited, Canada's largest family-owned egg producer, from 2016 to 2023.

He was a director of Jewish Free Loan Toronto (JFLT) from 2016 to 2023 and has acted as co-chair of JFLT's Loan Committee, as well as chairman of its Policy and Procedures Committee and its Legal Committee. In addition, Jules was a director of the Bernard Betel Centre since 2022 and was chair of its Governance and Nominations Committee as well as a member of its Finance and Audit Committee. Jules was also member of the Finance and Audit Committee of the New Israel Fund of Canada since 2023.

Memorial donations may be made to Jewish Free Loan Toronto, 416-635-1217, www.jewishfreeloan.ca or to Bernard Betel Centre, 416-225-2112, https://betelcentre.org. ■

AARC Yiddish and events continued from page 7

who are vulnerable: across nations, across divides, across the fragility of ecosystems that sustain life on this planet.

Honoring tradition/celebrating culture

What emerged was a vision of Shabbat that is deeply collaborative, participatory, and evolving, one that honors and revives tradition, and that celebrates the art of Jewish cultural history.

The response in the room was palpable. Some people had tears in their eyes, moved by the ache of memory and nostalgia carried in the Yiddish language and melodies. Others spoke of a sense of joy that lightened the heart, especially during these difficult times.

In bringing together Hebrew liturgy, Yiddish song, and t'khines, the service expanded the emotional and spiritual range of Kabbalat Shabbat. And perhaps most importantly, it reminded us that prayer is not only something we inherit — it is something we create and recreate together, like Shnirele Perele, stringing pearls.

About the AARC

The AARC is a caring, inclusive and music- and art-loving community of people who want to practice and study Judaism, or simply be around people who share a commitment to Judaism's values. The AARC's spiritual leader, Rav Gavrielle Pescador, is known for her warmth, her collaborative spirit, and her incredible voice and harp playing. You are invited to visit https://aarecon.org/ or email info@aarecon.org to learn more about the Ann Arbor Reconstructionist Congregation.

AARC events for May

May 3
Book Club. We will be discussing *Margareta and Milena* by Gwen Strauss. For more information about the Book Club meeting and the amazing lunch that precedes it, email Greg Saltzman, gsaltzman@albion.edu. 1–2 p.m.

May 9
Second Saturday Morning Shabbat Service. Meditation with Anita Rubin-Meiller 10 a.m. This is a hybrid Shabbat Service led by our Rabbi, Gabrielle Pescador, at the JCC and on Zoom. Zoom link will be sent out the week before the event. 10:30 a.m. to noon followed by Torah Study 12–1 p.m.

May 17
Rosh Chodesh Sivan Minyan on Zoom. 10 a.m.

May 17
Beit Sefer Shavuot Open House & Picnic in the Park. 10 a.m. – noon.

May 20
Pop-in Torah Study with Rabbi Gabrielle on Zoom. 7 p.m.

May 22
Fourth Friday Kabbalat Shabbat. This is a hybrid service led by Rabbi Gabrielle Pescador in person at the JCC and on Zoom. Everyone is welcome! Service is followed by a nut-free potluck. 6:30 p.m. ■

Simchas and Sorrows

The Washtenaw Jewish community sends condolences to the families of:

Jules Lewy, brother of Fran (Mark) Berg. March 13.
Betty Jean Fry, mother of Kathy (Marty) Ludington. March 22.
Robert Piper, husband of Claudia Piper. March 29.
Elaine Saper, sister of Dr. Joel Saper. April 2.

The Washtenaw Jewish community sends mazel tovs to:

Wesley Jackson on the occasion of his bar mitzvah, May 9.
Ziva Caine on her bat mitzvah, May 9.
Estelle Wilensky on her bat mitzvah, May 30.
Eileen and Gary Freed on the birth of their granddaughter, Aviv Aryah Abudaram-Freed, daughter of Michele Freed and Jacob Abudaram.
Cheryl and Mark Good on the birth of their granddaughter, Hattie Marie, daughter of Ian and Jess Good and sister of Finn.
Ruth Kraut and Michael Appel on the birth of their grandson, Jordan Rafael, son of Gabriel Appel-Kraut and Erika Tarley.

Pardes Hannah events in May

May 2
Shabbat Morning Services. Pardes Hannah. In person and online. 10 a.m.

May 16
Study Session: Cycle of the Jewish Spiritual Year. Pardes Hannah. In person and online. 3 p.m.

May 17
Rosh Chodesh Circle. Pardes Hannah. Online only. 7 p.m.

May 31
Study Session: Opening the Siddur – Jewish Prayer – Sharing the Juice.

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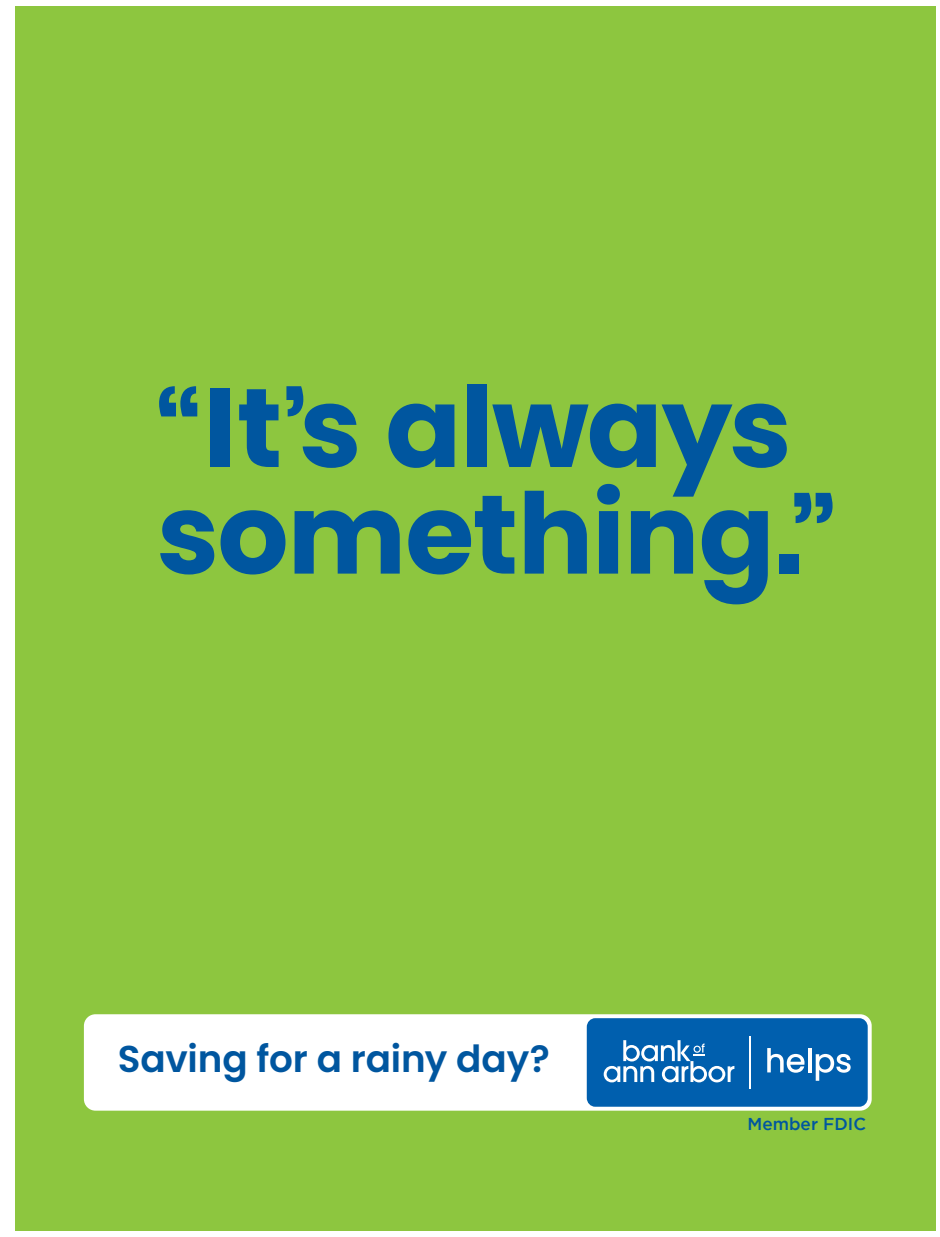
ENRICHMENT
Where every kid belongs.
aarecedonline.com/camps
Rec & Ed is a department of the Ann Arbor Public Schools.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VISIONS
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In her inspired and inspiring history of the Jewish Bund, Molly Crabapple has found her heroes for our time

By Andrew Silverstein

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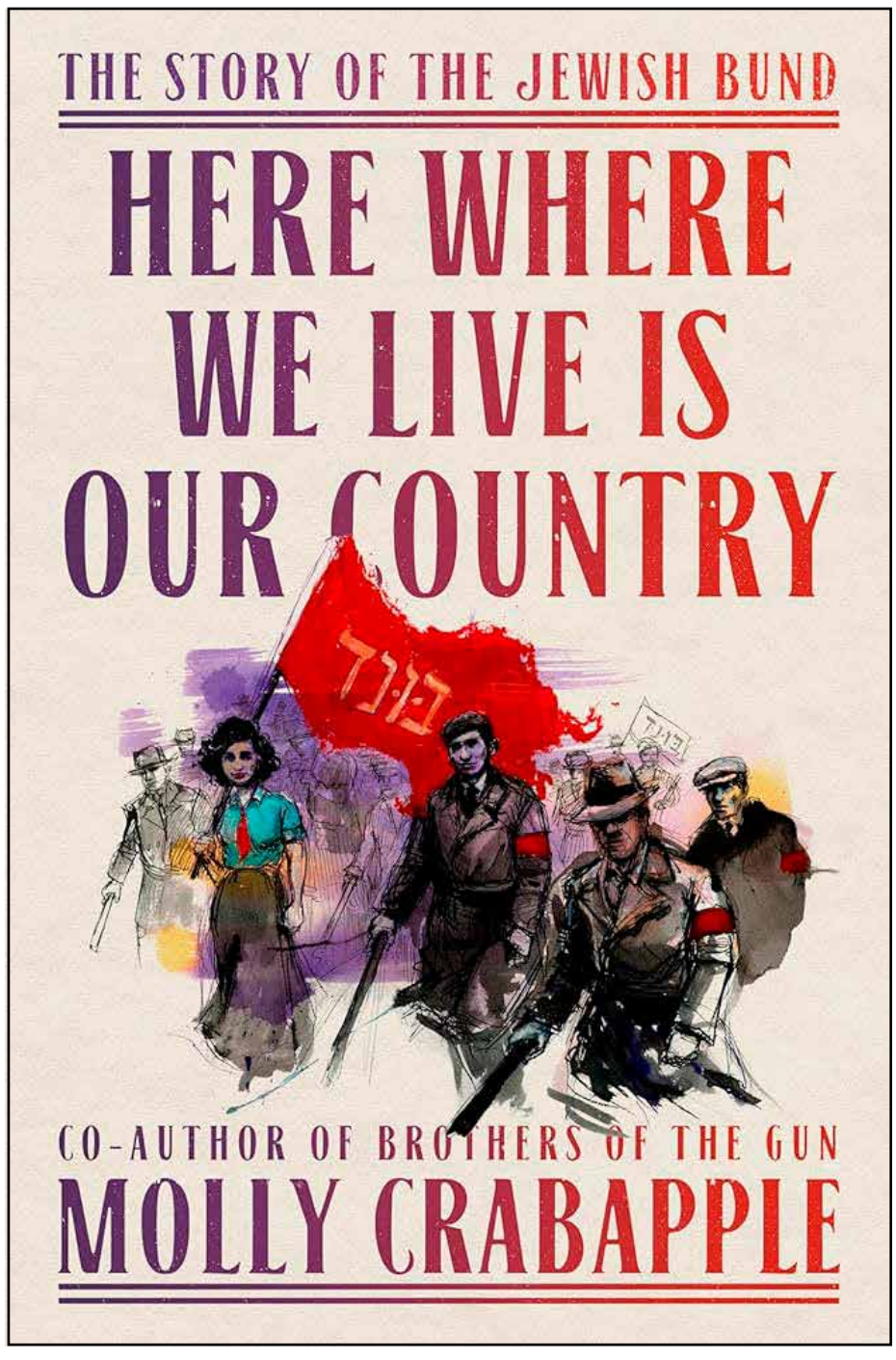

The week of Passover, north Brooklyn bus riders found something unusual at several bus shelters. Swapped out for paid ads were quotes including one translated from a 1938 essay in *Tsukunft*, a Yiddish literary monthly once published by the Forward Association.

"If a Jewish state should arise in Palestine," it read, "its spiritual climate will be eternal fear of the external enemy (Arabs); eternal struggle for every bit of ground with the internal enemy (Arabs); and an untiring struggle for the extermination of the language and culture of the non-Hebraized Jews of Palestine. Is this a climate in which freedom, democracy, and progress can grow?"

There are pithier anti-Zionist slogans graffitied in Brooklyn, but this quote is from Henryk Erlich, a leader of the Jewish Labor Bund, a staunchly anti-Zionist socialist party founded in Vilna in 1897 that became the most influential political party among prewar Eastern European Jews.

The bus shelter takeover was part of a guerrilla ad campaign for *Here Where We Live Is Our Country: The Story of the Jewish Labor Bund*, a new book by the artist, activist, and writer Molly Crabapple. The campaign, which started the same week the Justice Department sued Harvard University, accusing it of tolerating antisemitism by failing to crack down on anti-Zionist student protesters, also included wheatpasted posters of a model in fishnets holding Crabapple's book.

The Trump administration and leading American Jewish groups like the Anti-Defamation League and American Jewish Committee argue that opposing Zionism, defined as Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state, is antisemitic; Crabapple's response is a 400-page Jewish history lesson.

Before World War II, most Jews were not Zionists. Many Orthodox communities felt that forming a Jewish state was heresy, others thought the mass migration of nine million Jews from a hostile Europe was impractical. The Bund's opposition to Zionism was not religious or pragmatic; it was ideological. Bundists argued that the future of Jews was linked to all workers, and they should stay and fight repression in Europe, not leave. They called this form of solidarity do'ikayt, Yiddish for here-ness, as opposed to Zionism's there-ness.

Crabapple places the Bund, initially an outlawed group in Tsarist Russia, at the center of both the failed 1905 and successful 1917 revolutions. In interwar Poland, as a legal party, it became the most powerful Jewish political movement, even winning seats in municipal elections, and during the Holocaust, Bundists became ghetto fighters and partisans. But the Bund was purged by Stalin, who killed Erlich four years after his *Tsukunft* essay, and decimated by the Nazis. In postwar America, the Bund was mostly forgotten except by Worker's Circle, attendees of socialist Jewish summer camps, readers of *Bridges: A Jewish Feminist Journal*, and other Jewish peace activists.

Crabapple, a member of the Democratic Socialists of America and an Occupy Wall Street alumna, learned of the Bund through a watercolor by her great-grandfather the artist Sam Rothbort. The painting, set in the Belarusian shtetl of his youth, shows a young woman in a blue dress throwing a rock through a cottage window. The caption reads: "Itka, the Bundist."

In her 2018 *New York Review of Books* essay "My Great-Grandfather the Bundist," Crabapple recounts discovering that Rothbort's activism in Tsarist Russia forced him to flee to New York in 1904.

Since the publication of her article, Crabapple spent six years learning Yiddish, visited the former centers of Eastern Europe Jewish life, and dug through obscure Yiddish socialist tomes to produce her book. During the same time, Hamas attacked Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, and Israel responded by killing over 70,000 in Gaza in attacks which many, including the Israeli human rights group B'Tselem, have called a genocide. At the time of this writing, Israel is occupying southern Lebanon and along with the United States is at war with Iran. For the first time, Gallup polls show more Americans sympathize with Palestinians than with Israelis, and an increasing number of younger Jews have rejected Zionism outright and are rediscovering the Bund.

Crabapple's book is written for this moment. More than translating Bundist theory from Yiddish, she puts it into the language of today's left. When Julius Martov declared in 1894 "that Jewish workers were oppressed both as workers and as Jews, as a race and a class," Crabapple explains that he was invoking what the modern-day scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw calls "intersectionality" and was a form of "identity politics."

To tell the Bund story, Crabapple focuses on a cast of characters including Erlich's wife, the poet and activist Sophia Dubnow; the militant leader Bernard Goldstein; the famous ghetto smuggler Vladka Meed (nee Feigele Peltel); and her own great-grandfather Sam Rothbort. In some instances, she relies on memoirs; for Rothbort, she interprets the hundreds of paintings and sculptures in her great-aunt's Brooklyn home and pulls on genealogical threads from her mother's shoebox of family papers.

Crabapple, whose artwork is in the permanent collection of MoMA and the Rubin Museum, and has posters currently on display at the Poster House, introduces each character with an ink drawing portrait. Her artwork tends to lay bare her political perspective. She renders Donald Trump grotesque, while her sketches of Bundists are more similar to her portraits that glorify leftist icons like Luigi Mangione, the accused assassin of the United Health Care CEO Brian Thompson.

When asked in 2020 on the progressive Jewish podcast Treyf if progressives were engaging with a "romanticized fantasy of the Bund," she didn't disagree. "There's actually a great value to simplified and aesthetic symbols in politics," she said. "The fantasy of the Bund that I see is a muscly Jewish guy in a newsboy cap saying 'fuck the Zionists' with one middle finger while the other hand punches a Nazi."

Here Where We Live Is Our Country is not a caricature of the Bund, nor a work of fanfiction; it's a deeply researched portrait, but at its core lies this romantic vision. The Bund ran soup kitchens, sports programs, and day camps, and promoted the Yiddish language, but Crabapple is most attracted to their street-fighting militancy. And her narrative can be one-sided. The Erlich quote in the book and on the bus shelter was part of a public debate with his father-in-law, the historian Simon Dubnow. Dubnow's response goes untold.

But there are plenty of academic texts that dissect 90-year-old political debates. Crabapple's book is different, and better for it. *Here Where We Live Is Our Country* reads like an epic novel with the Bundists as its tragic heroes.

Crabapple, as narrator, relates her experiences protesting at the 2011 Occupy Wall Street encampment, canvassing housing projects with the DSA, reporting from the West Bank

Molly Crabspple has found her heros continues from psge 18

and Gaza, and traveling through war-torn Ukraine. The personal interjections remind the reader that this is not a dispassionate history. Naomi Klein's blurb praises the book as "a portal to an irresistible, lost world," but Crabapple's goal is not to write an elegy. She calls the Bund's history a "candle to illuminate the tumultuous present" and hopes her book "serves as a guide to our urgent moment." She decouples Zionism from Jewishness and shows that anti-Zionism alone is not antisemitic, but she leaves largely unresolved the question of what the Bund's example demands of us today.

The Bund organized eastern European Jewish workers who lacked basic civil rights. Today's challenge is less about Jewish empowerment than it is about how Jews wield power, vis-a-vis the state of Israel and its military. In the book, however, Israel barely appears as an actual place where millions of Jews and Palestinians live. Instead, Israel is seen through the prism of its founding ideology, Zionism — one which pre-war Bundists argued adopted the worst quality of European ethno-nationalism.

As the Erlich quote argues, a Jewish state in Israel was destined to repeat endless cycles of violence and tribalism. In this view, the socialist kibbutzes that seduced leftists like a young Bernie Sanders or the overtures of peace and coexistence by Liberal Zionists like Yitzhak Rabin, are all illusions. For Crabapple, the inescapable reality of Zionism is instead the right-wing Benjamin Netanyahu, the violent settlers, and increasingly brutal wars and occupation.

The antidote is the Bundists' concept of solidarity — where Jews join with the workers of the world but, unlike in Communism, hold on to their Jewish identity. One of the quotes Crabapple returns to several times is from the Socialist Congressman and Bundist ally Meyer London in 1905, where he inverts the story of Exodus: "Are you aware that in Russian Poland, thousands of our Jewish boys and girls are giving their lives for liberty? They pray to God, not to lead them again out of Egypt, but to help them to free Egypt."

The quote, like Crabapple's book, is poetic and noble. It goes against everything I learned in Hebrew School, yet somehow reflects Jewish values in its call to be empathetic to the oppressed, because we "were once a stranger in a strange land."

Reflecting on a 1938 Erlich speech about the rise of Nazism, where he calls on Polish Jews to stand in solidarity with the same people who had carried out pogroms across their country, Crabapple writes: "This was it. There was only Egypt, the Bund knew, and they were stuck with the Egyptians. They were people first, not Jews or goys." It is a beautiful and heartbreaking line, knowing what came next.

This tragic solidarity is presented as a point of inspiration, but how? The 2023 Jewish Voice for Peace ceasefire protest that filled Grand Central Terminal is offered as an example of Bundist-like solidarity in action, but Crabapple, who has supported a cultural boycott of Israel, stops short of prescribing what this anti-Zionism should mean today.

Vast numbers of Jews, including Bundists, did leave Egypt and cross into Israel — not because of ideology or religion, but because of history. American labor leader David Dubinsky, who is featured in the book, was exiled to Siberia by the Tsar and escaped to New York, where he co-founded the Jewish Labor Committee in 1934, providing Bundists critical support during the Holocaust.

In his memoirs, Dubinsky recalls telling David Ben-Gurion after the war, "even though I am sympathetic to the creation of Israel, I am not a Zionist." He then spent decades steering American labor to support Israel financially and politically.

Crabapple also includes Vladka Meed, the celebrated ghetto smuggler, drawing on her memoir *Both Sides of the Wall*, the proceeds of whose English edition were donated to the Ghetto Fighters' House Museum in Israel, where Meed led groups of Americans on educational trips.

The historian David Slucki in his 2012 book, *The International Jewish Labor Bund after 1945*, finds that over time the Bund came to terms with the state of Israel; the Bund's World Coordinating Committee accepted it as an important Jewish community, but not the sole political and cultural center, and eventually advocated a two-state solution.

It's hard to imagine the Bund simply "Standing with Israel" today. But nearly half of Americans under 30 describe Hamas as a militant resistance group rather than a terrorist organization, and anti-Zionism has been taken up by far-right antisemites. Crabapple doesn't spell out what the Bundist response would be today; she leaves that to the reader. What she does is resurrect a buried political tradition in a way her Bundist heroes would appreciate: not just in book form, but in the streets for everyday Brooklyn bus riders. ■

Andrew Silverstein is a New York-based freelance writer and the co-founder of Streetwise New York Tours. In 2023, he was named "Best Freelancer of the Year" by the American Jewish Press Association.

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